

# Building understanding of fairness, equality and good relations

Naomi Jones, Catherine Bromley,  
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National Centre for Social Research and  
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## **EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCH REPORT SERIES**

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## Executive summary

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) has among its aims reducing inequality, eliminating discrimination, strengthening good relations between people, and promoting and protecting human rights. These are challenging aims particularly given that there are varied understandings of the concepts of equality, fairness and good relations. Not enough is known about how the public interpret and value these concepts.

This research, carried out for the Commission by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) and the Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen) aims to build on existing evidence on public attitudes to explore further the public's understanding of the concepts 'equality', 'fairness' and 'good relations' and the key factors that influence public attitudes about these issues. It also considers the implications of people's understanding and attitudes for achieving change. This report covers the research in England, Scotland and Wales. A companion report (Dobbie et al., 2010) reports the Scottish findings only.

The research included a number of related components. First, existing evidence on public attitudes was reviewed. Second, a series of 23 focus groups throughout England, Scotland and Wales were held followed by two stakeholder seminars. The knowledge from these two stages was used to assist with the drafting of a set of survey questions which can be piloted and tested to form an instrument that measures and tracks public attitudes.

### Key findings

- The literature review indicated that the main **drivers** of attitudes to equality, fairness and good relations are likely to include a combination of socio-demographic factors (such as age and education) and underlying core values and beliefs. Area or community level characteristics do not appear to be as significant as individual drivers.
- Equality was broadly split by focus group participants into equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. While the first of these was seen as desirable the second was seen as neither desirable nor achievable.
- People generally struggled with the term 'good relations' and did not use it in everyday life.



- There was a view that Britain can be **too** fair. Participants with this view felt some people get more out of the system than they put in. This was related to a perception of deserving and undeserving groups.
- One view was that Britain was not equal, as certain groups or individuals had access or opportunities that others did not.
- When discussing case studies of situations illustrating the concepts of fairness and equality, participants were often divided in their views of the examples, illustrating the range of public opinion.
- As a whole, the three concepts were seen as unobtainable. But they attracted public support when broken down into understandable and specific contexts, and were recognised as important components of society.

## Findings

### Existing evidence

- No studies currently exist that can fully answer the question of what people **understand** by the terms equality, fairness and good relations.
- Two issues arise when considering the issue of equality: between **whom** does it apply and **what** should there be equality of? The second of these is commonly discussed in terms of processes, outcomes and opportunities.
- Attitudes to economic inequality have been extensively researched in Britain. This work shows there to be: a high degree of concern about the extent to which inequality exists, less pronounced support for measures to address it, and limited understanding of the issues involved.
- Extensive research about good relations and community cohesion also exists. But most of these studies have pre-defined community cohesion, for example in terms of strength of belonging to neighbourhoods, social contact, respect and good relationships between people from different backgrounds, and levels of involvement in local communities. No studies have sought to discover how much value people place on good relations or what they think it comprises.
- Existing literature suggests that the main **drivers** of attitudes to equality, fairness and good relations are likely to include a combination of socio-demographic factors (such as age and education) and underlying core values and beliefs. Area or community level characteristics do not appear to be as significant as individual drivers.

### Focus group findings

### Understandings of equality, fairness and good relations

- Understanding of the concepts of equality, fairness and good relations were related to both personal experiences and perceptions and the context in which they were discussed. They were seen as being distinct from each other yet highly interwoven and, at times, interdependent.
- There were two broad views of fairness: the first saw fairness as treating everyone the same regardless of their characteristics; the second saw it as treating people differentially according to their characteristics, but these were not mutually exclusive.
- Equality was broadly split into equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. While the first of these was seen as desirable the second was seen as neither desirable nor achievable.
- Although fairness and equality were sometimes used interchangeably, people generally felt that fairness was something that occurred on a personal level, between individuals and communities, whereas equality was something that could be legislated for and happened on a bigger scale.
- Good relations was understood in three contexts: in the community, in an employment context and in international relations. Participants generally talked about good relations on a community level and in terms of neighbourliness, people getting on with each other. However, people generally struggled with this term and did not use it in everyday life.
- Of the three concepts, fairness was the one people felt most comfortable using.

### Attitudes towards equality, fairness and good relations

- Participants found it difficult to decide whether they felt Britain was fair or unfair. Three main stances emerged. The first was that Britain **was fair**, the second was that Britain was **fair in certain areas but not in others** and the third was that Britain was **not fair**.
- Britain was considered fair compared to other countries or to what Britain was like in the past. Education, health care and employment were areas that people considered to be fair although people also gave examples of unfairness in relation to these areas. Other areas described as being unfair in Britain were immigration, the benefit system, financial systems and housing.

- But there was also the view that Britain was **too** fair and that some people got out of the system more than they put in. This was related to a perception of deserving and undeserving groups.
- Participants found it easier to decide on whether Britain was equal than whether it was fair. Although they felt there was greater equality in Britain than in other countries and that legislation was improving the situation, there was a general consensus that, overall, Britain was not equal.
- Two main views emerged in relation to equality in Britain. The first related to how people were **treated** based on certain characteristics. The second related to **access** and **opportunities**. It was felt that Britain was not equal as certain groups or individuals had access or opportunities that others did not.
- Of the three levels of good relations recognised, local or community-based good relations resonated most strongly with participants. The size and composition of the community and societal changes all impacted on people's views of good relations at a local level.
- A range of factors influenced people's attitudes towards fairness, equality and good relations:
  - the media
  - personal experiences and circumstances
  - upbringing, family life, parents and peers
  - how achievable they felt they were
  - the focus group dynamic during the research.
- While fairness and equality were not seen as fully attainable, they were regarded as being important. However, there were more nuanced views of the distinctive role of each concept and suggestions that they were not always desirable. There were also discussions about fairness and equality being taken **too** far in the form of **positive discrimination**.

### **Equality, fairness and good relations in practice**

- People used language of fairness and unfairness rather than equality and good relations during discussion of the case studies, despite some of the case studies being related to inequality. This may be due to the fact that participants found it harder to discuss equality as a concept and were more likely to refer to situations as unfair. It may also be because equality was seen as a wider concept that could be legislated for and applied at a government level, whereas fairness and

unfairness were seen as occurring on a personal level and held more immediate resonance.

- A number of the case study examples were raised spontaneously by participants prior to them being given the case studies to discuss. Groups were often divided in their views of the examples illustrating the range of public opinion.
- Economic inequality was seen to be more acceptable than other inequalities. But aside from this, no inequalities stood out as being more or less acceptable in the way people spoke about or prioritised them. People's views were strongly related to their personal characteristics and experiences.

### **Implications**

- To move people's attitudes along there needs to be shared understandings of what fairness, equality and good relations mean, yet these were not apparent in the study. Any discussion of the issues must set the concepts within a clear context and provide a well communicated set of definitions.
- Any attempt to shape public attitudes needs to take account of the two clear approaches to fairness and equality emerging from the study – the need to treat everyone the same and the need to treat people differently according to need, These were not seen as mutually exclusive and participants often expressed both views. Although the opportunity for everyone to achieve the same should be there, inequality of outcome was acceptable.
- Participants' understanding of good relations at the community level focused on 'bonding social capital' and included intergenerational relationships. But it did not refer explicitly to diversity or multiculturalism or 'bridging social capital' between different social groups. Any attempt to encourage good relations will need to take account of public priorities and understanding.
- As a whole, the three concepts were seen as unobtainable so any attempt to shape public attitudes towards them will need to focus on easily understandable and specific contexts. When broken down in this way they have the potential to attract public support and be recognised as important components of society.
- The only way of tracking attitudinal change over time is through a survey. Any questionnaire on this topic will need to pay particular attention to the ways in which people understand and discuss these concepts, as well as the ways in which they have been framed in more theory-focused debates. Moreover, the questions will have to refer to contexts and examples that do not age rapidly.

- The draft questions presented in this study will need extensive piloting and cognitive testing with the public to ensure people understand the questions in the way intended and their responses are meaningful.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

This report presents the findings of a study commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) which aimed to explore the general public's attitudes towards issues relating to 'equality', 'fairness' and 'good relations'. The purpose of the research was to feed into the Commission's conceptual thinking in these areas in order to help it communicate effectively and build support for its objectives.

The Commission was established on 1 October 2007 and brought together the work of the three previous equality commissions, the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission. In addition, the Commission has taken on responsibility for other equality areas – age, sexual orientation and religion or belief – as well as for human rights. The Commission works across Britain, and has offices in Manchester, London, Cardiff, Bangor, Glasgow and Edinburgh, but it does not have responsibility for Northern Ireland, which has its own commission.

As an independent, statutory body, the Commission aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights. It also enforces equality legislation on age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation and encourages compliance with the Human Rights Act, as well as giving advice and guidance to businesses, the voluntary and public sectors, and to individuals.

One of the challenges of fulfilling the Commission's aims is that understandings of equality vary between people, situations and over time. In addition, the concepts of equality, fairness and good relations are complex and the relationship between them is not always clear. Existing research, such as the British and Scottish Social Attitudes Surveys, provides valuable insight into what people do not want, but there is little information into what people do want in terms of a positive vision of equality. In addition, the existing research has generated limited data on how and why people think the way they do or the range and nature of experiences and ideas that underlie their attitudes. This research was commissioned to fill that gap.

### 1.2 Aims and objectives

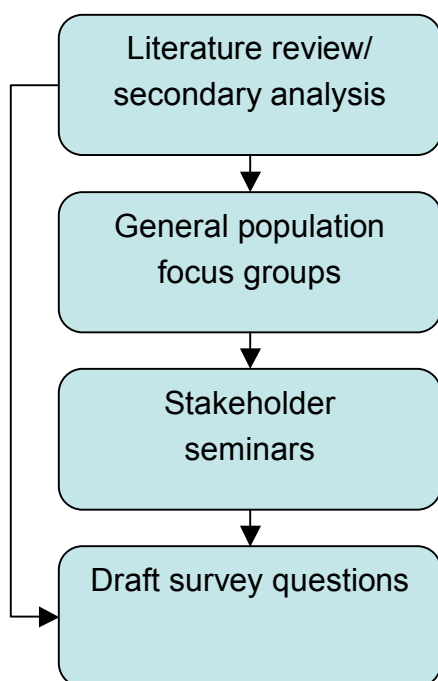
The broad aims of the research were to explore the public's **understanding** of the terms equality, fairness and good relations; the key factors that influence people's **attitudes** to these issues (including how attitudes are shaped within communities and how they vary across them); and the implications of people's understanding and

attitudes for achieving **change**. Within these broad aims, the study had seven specific objectives:

- to map people’s understanding of the terms fairness, equality and good relations
- to describe people’s understanding of the relationship between good relations and fairness and equality
- to identify the factors that influence people’s attitudes to fairness, equality and good relations
- to identify the range of ideas, experiences and concepts people use to legitimise their beliefs about fairness and equality
- to describe the factors that influence how people rank achieving equality and good relations relative to other desirable social outcomes
- to map the range of aspirations in relation to equality, fairness and good relations
- to draft a set of survey questions that will allow for further refinement and future testing.

### 1.3 Methodology

In order to address the objectives set out above, the research team adopted a design that included four linked and iterative stages, as illustrated in the diagram below.



Below we discuss the methodology for each stage.

**Stage One: Literature review and secondary analysis**

Data sources regarding public attitudes towards discrimination, prejudice and community relations already exist. These were reviewed in the form of a short evidence review. Full details of the methodology employed for this review can be found in Chapter 2.

**Stage Two: General population focus groups**

Focus groups were used to explore issues relating to the understanding of and attitudes to fairness, equality and good relations among the general population. This approach was used because of the need to map a wide range of views, which focus groups are able to do effectively, and also because the conceptual nature of the issues being discussed meant that group interaction would help participants engage with the issues.

**Sampling and recruitment**

Purposive sampling (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) was used in order to generate the sample for the focus groups. Purposive sampling aims to capture as wide a range of views and experiences as possible, rather than to be statistically representative. As such, key criteria are chosen that relate to the research objectives and are likely to be associated with differing views and experiences. For this study, the highest level of criteria was that separate groups would be conducted in England, Scotland and Wales. The second level of criteria related to the mix of participants in each of the groups. The criteria were related to the equality strands of the commission, and were ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, age, gender and religious beliefs. In addition, the groups in Wales included both Welsh and non-Welsh speakers.

The groups were deliberately composed so that each group contained respondents who had enough in common to generate some shared experience but some diversity to allow for a range of views and creative discussion. Each group was homogeneous in terms of age group and level of educational attainment. This was to minimise perceptions of status difference that could interfere with productive discussion. For the purpose of the groups, ages were split into the following four categories: 18 to 25, 26 to 46, 46 to 64 and 65 plus. Educational attainment was divided into High and Low which was defined by whether the participants had stayed at school beyond the age of 16 or not. Each group had a mix of men and women and a mixture of the secondary level criteria outlined above. This meant that the groups were very diverse in terms of ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious belief and disability. The groups also contained a mix of people who were employed, unemployed and retired.

The locations of the groups were selected to ensure a range of urban and rural settings as well as a range of geographical areas.



**Table 1.1 Age band, educational attainment and location of each group**

<b>Group</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>
18-25 low education	Harwich/Liverpool	Ayr/Glasgow	Swansea
18-25 high education	Newcastle	Elgin	Cardiff
26-45 low education	Bristol	Edinburgh	Carmarthen
26-45 high education	Nottingham	Jedburgh	
46-64 low education	Oldham		
46-64 high education	Devon	Stirling/Hawick	Powys
65+ low education	Northumberland	Lerwick (Shetland)	Llandudno
65+ high education	London	Renfrew	

A fuller breakdown of participant demographics can be found in Appendix D.

Recruitment was carried out by a specialist recruitment agency, which used a screening questionnaire to identify individuals whose characteristics met the sampling criteria. In order to facilitate participation in the research, venues were chosen that would be easy to get to and accessible for people with restricted mobility. In addition, respondents were asked at the recruitment stage if they anticipated any difficulty with travel to the venue, and if so, arrangements were made to help with their transport. All respondents were given £35 in recognition of the time and effort taken to attend the focus group.

### **Conduct**

The focus groups were carried out by a moderator using a topic guide, which can be found at Appendix B. The purpose of the topic guide was to help focus and shape the discussion, while allowing each group to generate and discuss relevant issues as they arose in an open way. The groups were conducted using open, non-leading questions and answers were probed. Each group discussion lasted around one and a half hours. The broad topics discussed within the groups were:

- understanding of equality and fairness
- understanding of good relations
- reactions to real life situations (using case study cards)
- views about the importance of equality
- final reflections.

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

### **Data management and analysis**

The data in this study were analysed with the aid of Framework (Ritchie et al., 2003), a systematic approach to qualitative data management that was developed by NatCen and is now widely used in social policy research (Pope et al., 2006).

Framework involves a number of stages. First, the key topics and issues which emerge from the research objectives and the data are identified through familiarisation with the transcripts. The initial analytical framework is then drawn up and a series of thematic charts or matrices are set up, each relating to a different thematic issue. The columns in each matrix represent the key sub-themes or topics whilst the rows represent individual participants. Data from verbatim transcripts of each interview are summarised into the appropriate cell. In this way, the data are ordered in a systematic way that is grounded in participants' own accounts, yet oriented to the research objectives.

This approach was supported by a bespoke software package, Framework, also developed by NatCen. The software enabled a flexible approach to the creation of the matrices, allowing new columns or 'themes' to be added during the process of data management. This software also enables the summarised data to be hyperlinked to the verbatim text in the transcript so that it is possible to move back and forth from the more abstracted summary to the original data at will, depending on the level of analysis and detail required. Finally, the cases and themes that were displayed could be chosen with complete flexibility, easily allowing cases to be ordered, compared and contrasted. The Framework approach and the Framework software meant that each part of every transcript that was relevant to a particular theme was noted, ordered and was almost instantly accessible.

The final stage of analysis involved working through the charted data in detail, drawing out the range of experiences and views, identifying similarities and differences, developing and testing hypotheses, and interrogating the data to seek to explain emergent patterns and findings.

### **Stage Three: Stakeholder seminars**

Two stakeholder seminars were carried out in Wales and Scotland. The purpose of these seminars was to explore the views of stakeholders working in a range of fields including academia, policy and service provision. Stakeholders were selected jointly by the Commission and NatCen and sent an invitation to attend a research seminar. The seminar took the form of a short presentation by NatCen researchers on the findings emerging from the focus group research followed by series of focused discussions about the implications of the research for both the Commission and the equalities community as a whole. The seminars were chaired by NatCen staff. A third seminar was scheduled to take place in London but low response rate on two

separate dates meant that it had to be cancelled. It is unclear why the response to the seminar was better in Scotland and Wales than in England. It could be that the timings were simply unsuitable for the delegates or that, in England, there are perhaps more opportunities to attend and contribute to a seminar on equalities than in Wales or Scotland. The absence of an English seminar impedes the authors' ability to successfully represent the stakeholder viewpoint. However, data from the Scottish and Welsh seminar are included in this report.

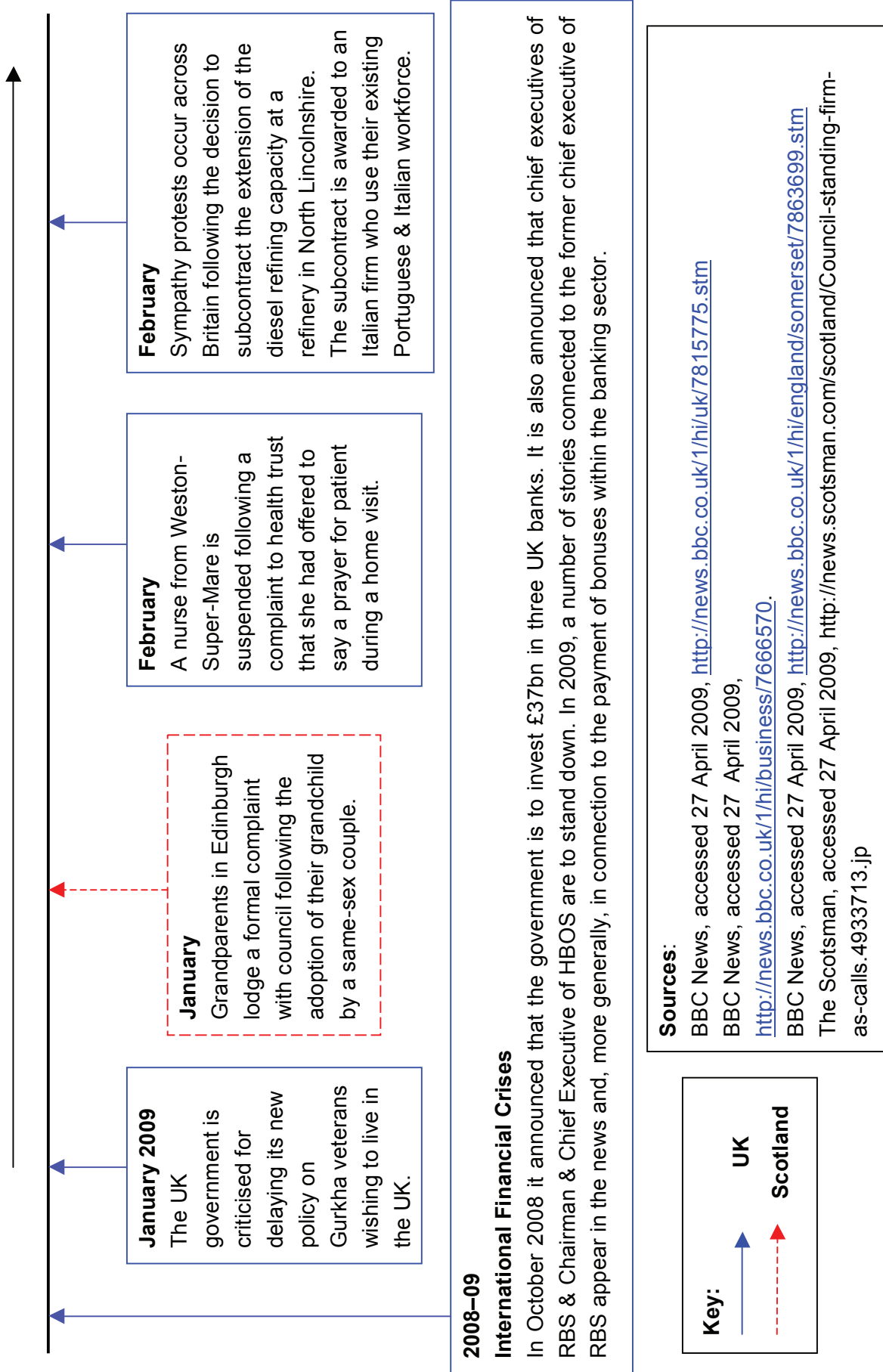
#### **Stage Four: Draft survey questions**

This final stage uses the findings from the qualitative data collection and information revealed at the secondary analysis stage to prepare recommendations for questions that could be used in a quantitative survey. The questions would need to go through piloting and cognitive testing before being turned into a final survey instrument.

#### **1.4 Context of the research**

Qualitative research aims to capture a diversity of views and to provide a range of views full enough that should the research be repeated again in the same locations with people from the same demographics and characteristics, the same themes would arise. However, any research must be situated in the wider context in which it is carried out. During the focus group phase of the study, it was clear that the media coverage at the time had a clear impact on participants' views on the subject. Had the research been done at another time, different themes might have dominated the discussions. The diagram below gives an indication of the news stories being covered at the time that the research took place.

Figure 1.1 Context of focus groups



## **1.5 Structure of report**

The rest of this report presents the results of the study. Chapter 2 sets out the findings from the literature review. Chapter 3 focuses on people's understanding of fairness, equality and good relations, including a discussion of thoughts about the terms individually and how they are understood together. Chapter 4 discusses attitudes, including views on the extent to which there is fairness, equality and good relations in Britain, the factors that shape people's attitudes and feelings about the importance of these issues. Chapter 5 explores how the concepts of equality, fairness and good relations play out in practice. The penultimate chapter, Chapter 6, brings together all of the data to draw conclusions about people's understanding and attitudes and discusses the implications for the Commission, particularly in terms of the potential to change attitudes. Finally, Chapter 7 presents a set of draft survey questions that are based on the findings of the study.

Throughout the report, verbatim quotations are used to illustrate the findings. They are labelled to show the gender, age bracket, and nation of the group. Quotes are drawn from across the sample. The report deliberately avoids giving numerical findings, since qualitative research cannot support numerical analysis. This is because purposive sampling seeks to achieve range and diversity among sample members rather than to build a statistically representative sample. As a result, qualitative research provides in-depth insight into the range of phenomena, their social context and the associations between issues.

## 2. Review of existing evidence

As set out in the introduction, the study is comprised of four iterative stages: an evidence review, qualitative focus groups with the public, seminars with key stakeholders, and the development of draft survey questions. This chapter presents the findings of the first stage evidence review.

Each of the stages helps to address the core research aims, but they each make a slightly different contribution. The primary objective of the evidence review was to identify existing literature, survey data, and secondary analysis opportunities that might help answer any of the following three research questions:

1. What do people **understand** by the terms equality, fairness and good relations and how does this relate to their understanding of the Commission's core mandates of equality, human rights and good relations?
2. What are the key factors that drive people's **attitudes** to fairness, equality and good relations, how are attitudes shaped within communities, and how do they vary across them?
3. What are the implications of people's understanding and attitudes for achieving **change**?

As the overall study was an iterative process, the first stage was also designed to inform subsequent stages of the research itself, for example by identifying:

- areas that might be worthwhile to explore at stages two (the focus groups) and/or four (questionnaire design)
- existing survey questions on similar or related topics to help with stage four (questionnaire design), and
- methodological issues that might influence the overall design of any future quantitative work.

### 2.1 Methods

The evidence review was split into two distinct stages: a literature review and a series of survey case studies. Two issues soon became apparent. Firstly, the broad range of search terms used generated a significant volume of results; more than had originally been anticipated. Although little of the literature had **direct** relevance in terms of answering the original research questions, it did yield a number of useful concepts and drivers that informed both the focus groups and final questionnaire design. Secondly, the survey case studies were of minimal use in terms of helping to

generate ideas for the focus group stage, though they were very useful for the questionnaire design stage.

### **Search terms and process**

The search terms below were used in a number of bibliographic databases, including the British Library catalogue. The asterisks highlight the more useful terms (in some cases the terms didn't yield useful results because the articles of interest had already been flagged by other search terms):

Public attitudes/public opinion/public perceptions **and**

- Equality/Equalities\*
- Inequality/Inequalities\*
- Equal opportunity/opportunities\*
- Egalitarianism\*
- Poverty\*
- Redistribution\*
- Welfare
- Prejudice\*
- Discrimination\*
- Fairness
- Social justice\*
- Social inclusion\*
- Social exclusion\*
- Good relations
- Segregation\*
- Integration\*
- Community relations
- Community cohesion
- Multiculturalism
- Solidarity
- Faith schools\*
- Religious schools\*
- Sectarianism
- Tolerance/Intolerance
- Social mobility\*
- Meritocracy\*

Non-journal material and grey literature was also identified using the British Library catalogue, a social policy database and by web searches of known research units and sources.

The literature search focused largely on identifying sources relating to the first and second of our research questions, namely: **understanding** of equality and **drivers** of attitudes.

### **Search results**

Over 300 sources were identified, but of these only around 60 were considered to be of interest. Very few sources were directly helpful in terms of people's understanding of equality; articles relating to drivers of attitudes were more common.

### **Selection process**

Studies based on very specific populations, including those based solely on student samples, were excluded unless the abstract suggested they might be of broader interest. Most articles related to primary research with the public, though a small number of more theoretically grounded articles were of use. Some studies carried out in other countries were excluded if the context was not judged to have sufficient application in Britain (for example, white South Africans' opinions of post-apartheid equality developments). Cross-national studies including Britain were generally included.

### **Survey case studies**

The literature cited in the review includes references to a number of studies based on surveys, a subset of which were selected to be presented in the more detailed format of case studies. The selected studies were:

- The British Social Attitudes survey (including the International Social Survey Programme<sup>1</sup>)
- The Citizenship Survey
- The Scottish Social Attitudes survey
- The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey
- Understanding Society (the UK Household Longitudinal Study)
- The World Values Survey
- The European Social Survey

The intention was to select studies with a range of survey methodologies, target populations, and objectives. Regularly conducted surveys based on representative samples of the general population were selected for this more detailed presentation, rather than local area studies, one off studies or those of an intermittent nature.<sup>2</sup> As one of the intentions of this exercise was to help inform the stage four questionnaire design, surveys designed to be administered in the UK were prioritised because the context and language used in surveys in other parts of the English speaking world



often have limited application here. Three of the studies selected are part of cross-national collaborations that enable the analysis of important country-level contextual effects. With the exception of the Citizenship Survey and Understanding Society, which have multiple objectives, the studies are all designed to measure attitudes rather than behaviour. Six of the studies are cross-sectional and are designed to measure attitudes at specific points in time; they can therefore be used to measure changes over time in population level attitudes. Understanding Society has a longitudinal design which follows-up the same group of people over time so it is able to uncover changes at the level of individuals, rather than the population as a whole.

## **2.2 Evidence review findings**

### **Introduction**

The following discussion draws on both the case studies and the literature search. In some instances they overlap, for example when journal articles or reports are based on one of the case study surveys.

Table 2.1 sets out this study's three overarching research questions, as well as the two supplementary objectives for the evidence review, and presents a summary of how the themes that emerged from the literature related to them. Very little of the literature identified was able to directly answer the first of the three research questions. However, as the discussion below highlights, a number of studies of related issues did provide some useful insights. In contrast, the literature around the second question, drivers of attitudes, was more helpful. The third question, as mentioned above, is best answered by taking all the stages of this study into consideration. Some interesting themes worth exploring further in stages two or four also emerged.

Some of the surveys addressed in the case studies were more helpful in respect of some of the questions than others. For example, a significant amount of analysis of the European Social Survey has focused on drivers of attitudes, in particular in relation to values and cultural contexts (unsurprisingly for a cross-national study). With just four rounds of data collection underway it was of less use as a direct source of question material for topics other than values which are particularly well developed in that study.

The studies that contributed the most in terms of both potential question formats and lessons for a new questionnaire are the three long-running major attitudinal studies within the UK: the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, the Scottish Social Attitudes survey, and the British Social Attitudes survey. The latter of these has been running since 1983 using a multi-topic questionnaire so it stands out above all other sources in terms of the regularity of its conduct, the volume of questionnaire material covered and the time span it covers. The Citizenship Survey and Northern Ireland

Life and Times Survey were particularly helpful in relation to good relations and community cohesion issues. The World Values Survey provided confirmation of the importance of including measures of values in the final questionnaire but was of less use in terms of actual questions to use. The review of Understanding Society questions (the study launched in January 2009 so no analysis has been carried out) proved to have little that would help answer any of our research questions, although it will be of use to the Commission in other ways. It collects a lot of demographic information about its participants that can be used to monitor the life experiences and outcomes for people from many different backgrounds and equality groups.

**What do people understand by the terms equality, fairness and good relations and how does this relate to their understanding of the Commission's core mandates of equality, human rights and good relations?**

As this question has many parts, the following discussion addresses equality and fairness. Good relations is considered after this.

*Definition of terms*

It is useful to consider first what the terms equality and fairness mean. To state that they are contested terms would be a gross simplification of the philosophical debates surrounding them that have been conducted over many centuries and are still live today. This is not the place to rehearse such debates but a brief overview of how these terms are interpreted is valuable. Starting with equality, Burchardt's (2006) paper on behalf of the Cabinet Office Equalities Review includes an overview of different meanings of equality, drawing on both philosophical literature and applied policy practice. It starts by distinguishing the issues of between **whom** equality should apply and **what** there should be equality of. From the Commission's perspective, the 'between whom' issue is largely settled, for the time being, on the basis of the strands for which it has responsibility: age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion/belief, and sexual orientation. Though as discussed further below, this may well change over time. In response to the latter question, Burchardt discusses the relative strengths and weaknesses of the common conceptualisations of equality that exist in terms of process, outcome, and opportunity (each of which has, in turn, multiple meanings and interpretations).

**Table 2.1 Summary of evidence review questions and themes identified**

<b>Primary questions</b>	<b>Themes identified</b>
What do people <b>understand</b> by the terms equality and fairness and how does this relate to their understanding of the Commission's core mandates of equality, human rights and good relations?	Studies of income inequality/poverty, community cohesion and integration have some tangential use here.
What are the key factors that drive people's <b>attitudes</b> to fairness and equality, how are attitudes shaped within communities, and how do they vary across them?	Drivers identified: -psychological theories -values -education -wealth -age/generation -regime/cultural context -prejudicial views -group/personal interest
What implications do the nature of people's understanding and attitudes have for achieving <b>change</b> ?	(All Stages of this research will address this)
What areas might be worthwhile exploring at stages two and/or four?	-The role of knowledge -Legitimizing beliefs -The importance of values -Life course experiences
What methodological issues need to be taken into consideration?	-How to measure key variables

Equality of process can be typified as a concern for ensuring equality of treatment irrespective of the outcomes this delivers or the pre-existing needs of individuals. Whereas equality of outcome, in its simplest form, would deliver identical outcomes without regard to need, wants or individual agency. Equality of opportunity is sometimes considered an improvement on the process and outcome approaches as it focuses on the extent to which individuals have the opportunities available to them to achieve certain outcomes. For example, they may face constraints related to resources, skills, efforts and the wider societal context in which these all interact. Burchardt (2006) expands on this meaning of equal opportunity and highlights three key related concepts: meritocracy, responsibility egalitarianism and capability. In a meritocratic approach people's opportunities would only be constrained by their individual talents and efforts, while wider social disadvantages would be considered

invidious. However, this ignores the possibility that people's talents and efforts are in part shaped by disadvantage in the first place. The responsibility egalitarianism approach posits that people's opportunities should not be impeded by factors over which they have no direct control. This in part addresses the concerns raised about the meritocracy approach. However, Burchardt (2006) argues that it is not always possible to establish which factors are and are not within an individual's control. For example, a person's career progression could be due to their own effort and talents or due to the prevailing culture in an organisation that favours certain types of employees over others when training and developing their staff. Further, it focuses heavily on the individual and neglects wider institutional and societal constraints on opportunity.

The capability approach, which is most notably associated with the work of Amartya Sen (for example in Sen, 1980, 1985 and 1993), attempts to counter the problems associated with the meritocratic and responsibility approaches. It forms the framework for equality that Burchardt and Vizard (2007) suggested the Commission adopt during the Equalities Review and is an increasingly common approach in policy contexts, for example in international development.

The capability approach focuses on what people are able to be, or can do, in their lives, as Sen stated in an early original exploration of the concept 'a person being able to do certain things' (Sen, 1980: 218). It is considered a more comprehensive, and arguably more useful, approach to equality as it encompasses notions of individual agency, values and wants; it takes account of some aspects of process equality; it accommodates variations in need; and it explicitly acknowledges the ways in which the institutional/societal context confers advantages and disadvantages and how this can accumulate over people's lives. Critically, the capabilities referred to in this approach are not individual capacities; Burchardt and Vizard (2007) stress that a person's lack of capability is indicative of a failing by society to provide the means to achieve it rather than a deficiency on the part of an individual. The index of capabilities suggested for use in the UK by Burchardt and Vizard (2007), presented below, is a useful illustration of what this approach can mean in concrete terms.

**Table 2.2 Burchardt and Vizard's (2007) core capabilities**

<b>Capability</b>
To be alive
To live in physical security
To be healthy
To be knowledgeable, understand, reason and participate in society
To enjoy a comfortable standard of living with independence and security
To engage in productive and valued activities
To enjoy individual, family and social life
To participate in decision making, have a voice and influence
To express yourself and have self respect
To know you will be protected and fairly treated by law

Turning now to the meaning of fairness, similar and often interwoven debates surround this concept as were discussed above in relation to equality. Fairness can arguably be framed as both an end in itself and a means to an end, depending on the application. For example, equality can be a route through which fairness is achieved. Alternatively, fairness in the form of fair treatment can be a mechanism through which greater equality is achieved. Fairness and equality are often framed in the philosophical literature in terms of justice. For example, Rawls's work on liberty and equality centres on the concept of 'Justice as Fairness' (Rawls, 2001). However, the key interest here, and what the evidence review focused on, is what the public understand by these terms. Of even greater significance is the extent to which these different conceptions of the terms have ever been empirically tested among the public.

### **Overview of studies**

It is worth noting that there are, at present, very few examples of work that have attempted to explore equality and fairness as single concepts, as distinct from work focusing on specific domains (see the discussion of income inequality below), or studies looking at equality, discrimination or prejudice in relation to specific groups (Bromley and Curtice, 2003; Abrams and Houston, 2006; Bromley, Curtice and Given, 2007). The discussion above distinguished the issues of equality between **whom** and equality of **what**. It would be difficult for a research study to attempt to address only one of these issues; asking people to give their views about equality between certain groups necessitates using some examples of what kind of equality is meant. Similarly, exploring different kinds of equality without being specific about between whom the equality is supposed to relate poses a number of difficulties, not least of which is respondents' comprehension of what they're being asked about. The Commission's interest in understanding what people mean by equality, fairness and

good relations and what drives their attitudes towards them suggests the need for a study that focuses more on the equality of **what** issue than the question of between **whom** it applies. The latter has already been established in statute as the strands for which the Commission has responsibility, though the Equality Bill currently passing through Westminster has proposed an expansion of its remit to include social class.

It is the balance of attention given to these two aspects that differentiates most existing studies in this area. For example, many studies have focused on equality between groups in just **one** respect such as between income groups, or gender, age or ethnic/racial groups. By limiting their enquiry to equality between groups in just one domain they have been able to place greater emphasis on exploring different kinds of equality, such as outcome, process or opportunity issues. In contrast, studies that have been concerned with looking at equality between numerous different groups, such as studies of discrimination focusing on age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and disability, have had less scope to also explore different types of equality. Some of the constraints will have been imposed by the available questionnaire space and concerns about respondent burden. More commonly the main reason why these aspects haven't had a full exploration in a single study is because most of the studies cited set out with a different set of objectives in the first place.

Another point to note about the existing studies is that they have tended to focus on inequality, unfair treatment or discrimination, rather than what people would consider to be fair or what equality would mean. Studies of inequality and unfair treatment will not necessarily reveal a complete picture of what people think about equality or fairness.

Further, it is only quite recently that equality issues have been explored to any great extent in areas other than income or economic inequality. Similarly, studies of prejudice and discrimination have historically focused on quite narrow areas in relation to ethnicity, and to an even more limited extent gender, disability and sexual orientation. The evidence gap in part reflects the recent history of the wider context in which legislation, with the intention of reducing inequalities between groups in Britain for many years focused only on ethnicity (the first Race Relations Act being passed 1965) and gender (starting with the 1970 Equal Pay Act). Similar Acts were passed in relation to disability in 1995, and in relation to age, religion, belief and sexual orientation as recently as 2006. The areas in which these laws apply (such as employment, goods and services) also vary depending on the group in question. The new Equality Bill will extend the areas further for some groups, will add new groups not currently covered, and aims to unite all the existing Acts into a single piece of legislation.

The establishment of the Commission, and this new interest in understanding equality and fairness in a broader sense, reflects these recent moves, in Britain at least, towards a more unified framing of equality that acknowledges its multi-stranded and often overlapping characteristics. The final report of the Cabinet Office Equalities Review provides useful contextual information in this respect (The Equalities Review, 2007) as does the work by Burchardt and Vizard (2007) discussed above. The single equality concept proposed by the Review has subsequently been revised and underpins the development of the Equality Measurement Framework (EMF). The EMF is in turn underpinned by the concept that there are three distinct aspects of inequality that can arise between individuals and groups, namely inequality of outcome (what people achieve), autonomy (the independence people have) and process (the treatment people receive in institutions and systems) (Alkire et al., 2009).<sup>3</sup>

As will become evident, however, the absence of work looking at equality and fairness as broad concepts, and the relative paucity of work that fully addresses the two issues of equality between whom and equality of what, might also be symptomatic of the added complexity that this approach necessitates. Most research looking at complex topics, and survey research in particular, requires concepts to be framed in quite concrete terms so any exploration of equality and fairness would need to use specific examples. As a consequence, any attempt to explore in full what people understand by equality using the different meanings that are usually applied to it by theorists or practitioners in the equality field, will be challenging. The qualitative stage of this research will be an important step in addressing this as its main objective will be to explore how people discuss these concepts without firm definitions being imposed on them. The questionnaire that is drafted will likely be an attempt to reflect both the theoretical constructs of equality that exist and the ways in which people talk about these concepts in their everyday lives.

#### *What does existing evidence reveal?*

We established fairly early on that there was little evidence that could directly answer our research questions if we limited ourselves to broad conceptualisations of fairness and equality, so the next step was to identify work that would be of related interest. Fairness and equality do feature in many surveys but they have been operationalised in more concrete terms. Studies of relevance to these concepts include those looking at:

- Poverty
- Economic inequality
- Social mobility
- Allocation of resources/access to services/public spending

- Fair treatment (for example, in the justice system)
- Discrimination

Studies of economic inequality provide the most directly useful information with respect to meeting the wider objective of designing questions to measure public understanding of equality and fairness. Economic inequality appears to be the aspect of equality that has received most attention in surveys, both in terms of the volume of questions asked and the length of time over which it has been covered, both in Britain and internationally as well. They are particularly helpful in terms of their source questionnaire material as they suggest forms of wording and concepts that could potentially be adapted for the purposes here. In addition, some of the contradictions in opinion about economic inequality (as outlined below) are likely to feature in any wider exploration of equality and fairness. Being alert to these at the questionnaire design stage should help to minimise situations in which one aspect of public attitudes to equality have been well captured but the analysis suggests other issues that can't be answered by the data collected.

A number of the articles identified in the evidence review based on studies of public attitudes to economic inequality and poverty were of use (Castell and Thompson, 2007; Orton and Rowlingson, 2007; Pahl, Rose, and Spencer, 2007; Fabian Society, 2005). Much of the British evidence on public opinion in this area is drawn from the British Social Attitudes survey series, indeed Orton and Rowlingson's review of literature about public attitudes to economic inequality drew the conclusion that this has the most comprehensive data on this topic and its findings were based largely on this source. However, there is relatively little evidence about people's **understanding** of any of these terms as distinct from their attitudes to them. Further, while there have been numerous studies exploring public attitudes towards, and understanding of, some of the **mechanisms** through which income equality could be achieved, for example the tax system (Brook, Hall and Preston, 1996; Hedges and Bromley, 2000), the benefit system (Hills, Sefton and Stewart, 2009), as well as the nature of income distributions and society's composition (Hedges, 2005; Taylor-Gooby and Hastie, 2002), none of the studies cited had the explicit aim of exploring the broader question of what would constitute equality and fairness and what the public understand by those terms. However, by exploring these various mechanisms for achieving income equality, these are probably the closest most studies have come to teasing out public support for different concepts of equality in terms of the process, outcome and opportunity terms discussed above.

Figure 2.1 presents some findings from the British Social Attitudes survey on three questions related to income inequality. These are useful to consider for two reasons. Firstly, this data is drawn from the most comprehensive study in Britain of any aspect



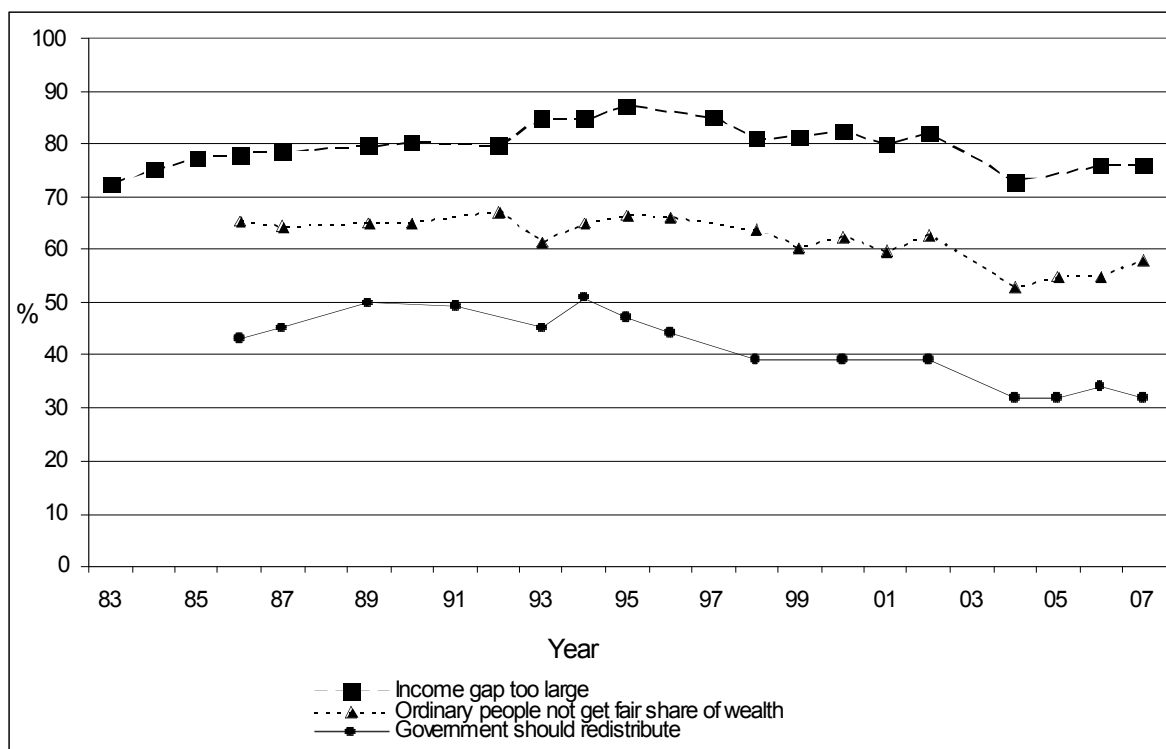
of equality that has been conducted. Secondly, it reveals some of the challenges that any future study attempting to broaden its scope away from just economic concerns might face. In many years this study has asked as many as 40 questions about this topic; the following three questions have been included in most years even when the topic hasn't been covered in great detail. The first asks people to say what they think about the size of the gap between people's incomes while the second two are agree/disagree statements about the broad principles of fair wealth distribution and actions to minimise inequalities:

Thinking of income levels generally in Britain today, would you say that the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large, about right, or, too small?

How much do you agree or disagree that ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth?

Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off.

**Figure 2.1 Attitudes to income inequality, wealth sharing and redistribution, 1983–2007, Britain**



Source: British Social Attitudes survey, National Centre for Social Research.

As the chart shows, the most persistent finding is that an overwhelming majority of people in Britain think that the gap between those on the highest and lowest incomes is too large. The proportion has fluctuated over the period but is never less than 7 in 10. In contrast, a lower proportion, ranging between 53 per cent and 67 per cent, agree that wealth is not shared fairly. An even smaller proportion agree that redistribution of income would be a suitable mechanism for addressing inequality; never more than 4 in 10 in the past decade have agreed with this and only around 1 in 3 has done so since 2006.

The last two of these questions have also been asked in some years of the annual Scottish Social Attitudes survey (SSA) but not in the more intermittent Welsh Life and Times surveys conducted in 1999, 2001 and 2003. The proportions in Scotland who agree that wealth is not shared fairly, and that income should be redistributed, are a little higher than in Britain as a whole, though the size of the difference is generally small and fluctuates with no consistent pattern. The following chart illustrates this with the figures for the question about whether wealth is shared fairly.

**Figure 2.2 Attitudes to wealth sharing, 2002–07, Britain and Scotland**



Source: British Social Attitudes survey, National Centre for Social Research; Scottish Social Attitudes survey, Scottish Centre for Social Research.

The review by Orton and Rowlingson (2007) of attitudes to economic inequality in Britain highlighted:

- the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of public opinion about income inequality (as reflected in the above data showing widespread concern that the gap between those with high and low incomes is too large while support for redistribution is much more muted)
- generally low levels of knowledge about the tax and benefit systems, and about income distribution in the UK
- a lack of clarity regarding what people understand by the concepts explored in surveys of income inequality and redistribution.

The key question is what this might mean for a survey of equality, fairness and good relations. The fact that studies of just *one* type of inequality have struggled to overcome imperfect knowledge on the part of respondents, and have uncovered contradictory attitudes suggests that focusing on public *understanding* of these concepts could potentially help address some of these difficulties. Eliciting what people understand equality to mean in a variety of contexts should be relatively straightforward in terms of question design. However, the need to locate this firmly within concrete contexts (rather than as a broad concept) could prove challenging in terms of the number of questions required to capture the topic comprehensively.

The ISSP Social Inequality module, asked in Britain as part of the British Social Attitudes survey (BSA) in 1987, 1992, 1999 and to be repeated in 2009, is primarily focused on income inequality (some of the questions discussed above are drawn from it). However, it also includes questions about some wider aspects of equality that aren't framed directly in economic terms.<sup>4</sup> Some of the questions asked in this way may help the process of bridging specific contexts and general principles. An example of some of these broader questions is a series that asks about the factors that are important for getting ahead in life. The options span many of the aspects of equality of opportunity that were discussed above, as follows:

- personal effort (having ambition and working hard)
- factors over which people have no direct personal control (such as ethnic background, gender, coming from a wealthy family, having well-educated parents)
- social or political capital (knowing the right people, having political connections, bribery), and
- grey areas that could be in someone's direct control or might be influenced by societal factors (such as being well educated).

It would be interesting to pursue the possibility in the questionnaire design stage of adapting this to show what correspondence there is between what people think happens in practice (as the ISSP question is currently framed) and what they think **should** ideally happen.

Many of the questions in this module attempt to contrast perceptions of what people think does and should happen which in turn tap closely into the interest here in concepts of fairness. For example, there are questions about the pay levels for a series of different occupations (from factory worker to chair of large company) which ask people to state what a person in these jobs does and should earn. Similarly there will be a new question in 2009<sup>5</sup> in which people will be presented with five diagrams representing how a society might be organised (for example, a pyramid with a small elite and most people at the bottom, or a diamond shape with most people in the middle). Respondents first have to decide which picture best matches their country, and then they have to say which picture matches what they think their country ought to look like.

The concept of social mobility is of related interest here; the ISSP question above about life chances taps an aspect of this. Social mobility is the process through which people change their social status (for example in class, occupational or other terms). This can happen over the course of someone's life (intra-generational mobility) or can occur between generations. The most concrete example of inter-generational upward social mobility is a university graduate in a professional occupation whose parents left school at 16 and had manual jobs all their lives. Wilkinson and Pickett, (2009) consider upward social mobility to be the embodiment of equal opportunity in practice. Significant analysis has been conducted of the extent of social mobility within the UK (for example, Blanden, Gregg and Machin, 2005). Comparably less research has focused on public attitudes to it as a concept.

Ipsos MORI conducted a study about social mobility for the Sutton Trust in May 2008 that included attitudinal questions.<sup>6</sup> This found that 50 per cent think that opportunities for social mobility in Britain are about right, 31 per cent think they are too low and 6 per cent say they are too high. It also found that 69 per cent of adults agree that parental income plays too big a part in children's chances of getting on in life. So while the most common view is that opportunities for social mobility are about right in Britain, specific examples of the kinds of ways in which social mobility might be impeded elicit strong views in favour of what could be characterised as a more equal approach.

Fairness is implicit in a lot of the questions discussed above about inequality and in many cases it is also addressed more explicitly. The way fairness has been operationalised in surveys tends to fall broadly into two categories:

- whether people think certain kinds of **treatment** of people is fair, and
- whether they think certain decisions about how to **share resources** or spend public money are fair.

The first of these examples has greatest use for this work, though the second is also of some interest. Much of the work on attitudes to discrimination has centred on scenarios that tap into fair and unfair treatment of people. These are usually based on examples of people from groups that have traditionally experienced significant levels of discriminatory treatment. The SSA discrimination module is a major example of this kind of approach (Bromley, Curtice and Given, 2007; Bromley and Curtice, 2003) as is Abrams and Houston's 2006 study. The SSA questionnaire included examples of unfair treatment in relation to goods and services (whether a bed and breakfast owner should be allowed to refuse a booking from certain types of people) as well as examples of positive discrimination in which one group received more favourable treatment than others when being shortlisted for a job. For a full review of unfair treatment in the context of public services see McNaughton Nicholls and Creegan (forthcoming).

The issue of how public resources should be shared between groups in society has long been a feature of attitude surveys. Considerations of fairness are implicit in many of the examples posed, though fairness itself has rarely been the original objective of the questions. For example, the BSA has included questions about health care rationing that ask people to choose between different groups in terms of the treatment received (for example, whether younger people should have priority for certain treatments over older people). It has also looked at whether resources in the education system should be targeted at certain groups (such as whether grants for university students should be restricted to those from disadvantaged backgrounds or universal). Similarly, the issue of who should be entitled to state benefits has been a significant feature of the BSA for many years. A lot of the debates around these often centre on questions of fairness in terms of entitlement, for example whether it is fair for people who have contributed more to receive higher benefits as a result. Although these questions were part of wider modules about the health, education and welfare systems, and therefore not originally intended to tap fairness as a concept, they could be developed further in a study that takes fairness as its starting point. The questions on income equality discussed above came from extended modules of questions designed to address the issue in some detail. In contrast, these examples of questions drawing on fairness are taken from various parts of questionnaires

rather than from coherent studies of a single topic. It would therefore be unwise to base firm conclusions about public attitudes to fairness on single items such as these from disparate studies.

### **Good relations**

The above discussed some studies that will help inform our work around equality and fairness. As with equality and fairness, it was also necessary to further define what was meant by ‘good relations’. This term has obvious relevance for the Commission, one of whose aims is to strengthen good relations between people, and is evident in some Governmental settings. For example, in 2005 the Northern Ireland Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister published ‘A Shared Future – Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland’ with a corresponding set of objectives and a monitoring framework.<sup>7</sup> However, other examples suggest it is not a universally used term: the overarching performance framework that now drives the Scottish Government’s work emphasises social cohesion (specifically in relation to its objective ‘we have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society’) but it does not use the term ‘good relations’ (Scottish Government, 2007). To overcome this we looked for studies exploring issues relating to community or social cohesion and integration as close proxies for the concept that good relations intends to capture.

Johnson (2008) notes that the term ‘community cohesion’ was first coined in response to riots in Northern English towns in 2001. Various definitions of ‘community cohesion’ are available in academic or policy papers. For example, the Local Government Association’s 2004 guidance on building community cohesion describes a ‘cohesive community’ as one where:

- There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities
- The diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, and
- Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

However, it is not clear to what extent the public shares this understanding. One qualitative study which explored attitudes towards integration between different racial groups among the white working-class in England (Garner et al., 2009) found that ‘integration’ was often understood as ‘minorities giving up identity and merging with the local one’, that is, ‘assimilation’. The onus for integration in these perspectives is often placed entirely with immigrants. This suggests that the public’s understanding

of ‘cohesion’ or ‘good relations’ may be somewhat different from that of public bodies and the Commission.

Garner et al. (2009) also found that people often identified the necessity of people **contributing** to earn membership of a community – whether by joining in community activities, or by paying into the welfare system.

Johnson (2008) suggests that a key element of community cohesion must be to ‘break down barriers between the “parallel lives” that people live and foster meaningful interaction’, underlining the importance of contact in underpinning good relations.

A number of other studies relating to cohesion had an explicit focus on public attitudes, the main data sources being the Citizenship Survey (Laurence and Heath, 2008; Kitchen, Michaelson, Wood and John, 2006a) and the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILT). The latter has, for obvious historical and contemporary reasons, many questions about aspects of community relations in Northern Ireland. Although the NILT questions will be useful for developing survey questions by providing examples of possible ways to frame questions about community relations, their very unique context within the UK means they are of relatively less use in the following broad discussion about definitions of cohesion. The British and Scottish Social Attitudes surveys, and the Citizenship Survey, include quite comprehensive measures of cohesion. In these studies the concept is defined quite broadly and includes:

- Perceptions of how well people in neighbourhoods get on or share common values
- Measures of social trust
- Levels of ‘active’ citizenship and community activities such as volunteering
- Perceptions of racial (and other) prejudice (and their level over time)
- Membership of local social networks
- Degree of contact/social mixing with people from different backgrounds.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in England uses the following question in the Citizenship Survey as a formal indicator of cohesion:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that this local area (within 15/20 minutes walking distance), is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?

(Definitely agree, Tend to agree, Tend to disagree, Definitely disagree)

A slightly broader definition, used for Public Service Agreement 21 (in the UK Government's 2007 spending review), includes the proportion of people who have meaningful interactions with people from different backgrounds and the percentage who feel they belong to their neighbourhood.<sup>8</sup> The most recent findings that have been reported include data up to September 2008 (the survey reports on a quarterly basis).

**Table 2.3 Indicators of cohesion, England, 2003–08**

	2003	2005	2007/8	Apr–Sept 2008
% who feel they belong strongly to the neighbourhood				
Very strongly	27	31	34	36
Fairly strongly	43	43	41	40
All responding strongly	70	74	75	76
Respondents	8,835	9,134	8,740	4,334
% agreeing that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together	80	80	82	82
Respondents	7,771	8,045	7,605	3,693
% who mix with people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds at least once a month (excluding at home)	-	-	-	81
Respondents				4,350

Source: Citizenship Survey, Department for Communities and Local Government. The data are based on figures provided in the most recent statistical release, see: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/citizenshipsurveyq2200809>

Note: These findings are for England only as there are no directly equivalent measures for Scotland and the CLG statistical releases do not include the Welsh data for these measures.

On the surface, these figures appear to suggest very high levels of cohesion, including quite extensive levels of intra-community contact, as defined by mixing with people from different backgrounds. As part of this work, the Commission asked us to investigate the possibility of devising additional measures of social interaction to try and gauge the extent and nature of such interactions, rather than simply the frequency. This will be explored in the final stage of the research when draft survey questions are written.



While the above is a helpful summary of what kind of information is currently collected about cohesion, it does not get us any further towards knowing what the public understands good relations/cohesion to mean. However, it is possible to glean some sense of whether cohesion is something that people value or think is important. The Citizenship Survey asks people whether they think there is enough mixing between people of different ethnic and religious groups in their local area and in Britain as a whole. In 2007/08 29 per cent said there was enough mixing between these groups in their local area and 54 per cent said there should be more mixing, the corresponding figures for Britain as a whole were 17 per cent and 72 per cent. This suggests that a large majority think this is something that should happen in Britain, and by implication that they therefore value this aspect of cohesion as a concept.

The SSA provides another angle on this. Its discrimination module (see Bromley, Curtice and Given, 2007) asks people if they would rather live in an area with lots of different kinds of people or where most people are similar to them; the 2006 results suggest there is a stronger preference for similarity (49 per cent) than diversity (34 per cent). It might be worth exploring this further at stage four as there appears to be a contradiction in terms of one evidence source suggesting that people strongly support the principle that people from different communities should mix, while a different source reveals a preference for living in relatively homogeneous communities. It is unlikely to be the case that attitudes on this matter are so very different in Scotland and England that the difference is a product of the different survey settings. Exploring these concepts in the **same** survey might help establish whether it is indeed a contradiction or simply the case that people think the two principles can co-exist.

The Citizenship Survey also asks about important values for living in Britain, respondents are offered 17 options and can choose up to five of them. The next table presents the responses given in 2007/08 in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned. It shows that the items most commonly selected, by some margin, were respect for the law (57 per cent chose this), followed by tolerance and politeness towards others (56 per cent). At the other end of the scale, matters related to the political process were less commonly selected (voting, having a voice and the avoidance of basing policy on religious beliefs). The items about equality of opportunity (38 per cent), respect for people from different ethnic groups (34 per cent) and different faiths (33 per cent) are probably of most relevance to this work as measures of attitudes to equality and cohesion, though others are also relevant.

This data warrants greater exploration than is possible here but some exploratory analysis of the underlying patterns of choices people made suggests that certain

types of values are more commonly chosen together than others.<sup>9</sup> For example, equality of opportunity, freedom from discrimination and respect for different ethnic groups show a tendency to be chosen by the same people, whereas in contrast people who prioritise speaking English and patriotism are less likely to also choose one of these three items. To illustrate, 44 per cent of those who said freedom from discrimination was important also chose equality of opportunity, whereas 26 per cent of those who said it was important for everyone in Britain to speak English, and 27 per cent of people who chose pride in country/patriotism did so.

**Table 2.4 Indicators of cohesion, England and Wales, 2007/08**

% who chose each value (in descending order of % choosing them)	2007/8
Respect for the law	57
Tolerance and politeness towards others	56
Equality of opportunity	38
Freedom of speech/expression	36
Everyone should speak English	35
Justice and fair play	35
Respect for people from different ethnic groups	34
Respect for all faiths	33
Responsibility towards other people in the community	26
Freedom from discrimination	24
Freedom to follow a religion of choice	23
Pride in country/patriotism	22
Freedom to criticise the views and beliefs of others	19
Everyone should vote	12
Everyone has a voice in politics through democracy	10
That national policy is not made on the basis of religious beliefs	9
Respondents	9,281

Source: 2007/08 Citizenship Survey

What appears to be missing in the literature is any examination of people's broader **attitudes towards** cohesion as a principle, or indeed their understanding of what this means. This would include whether people think these are the measures of cohesion that they value and also what degree of importance they place on the principle of cohesion relative to other factors they consider to be important in their lives.

Intergenerational relations are another important aspect of good relations. Although the literature search did not uncover any studies looking specifically at this some of the surveys in the case studies had asked questions about this. The 2004 and 2006 SSAs included modules of questions about youth crime, which included measures of intergenerational contact and wider social connectedness as potential drivers of perceptions of youth crime and anti-social behaviour. As its specific focus was on youth crime it provides only a partial measure of intergenerational relations; all questions about contact with different age groups were about whether people knew the young people aged 11-15 and 16-24 in their local area.

As Anderson and Dobbie (2008) report, it showed that young people in these age groups were by no means considered a 'tribe apart', though varying levels of contact with this age group were apparent. Of most interest is perhaps the fact that it doesn't present a picture of polarised intergenerational relations, with contact declining as age increased, but rather it revealed a pattern related more to life stages than age itself. For example, those aged 18-34 were the least likely to know any 11-15 year olds, whereas the next two age groups (35-54) were the most likely to – largely because they were also the most likely to have children of their own this age. Intergenerational contact is heavily influenced by family contacts, more so than is probably the case with many other aspects of good relations or community cohesion. However there also appears to be an interaction with place, the SSA analysis showed that people living in social rented housing or in the most deprived areas were the most likely to know young people in their area. These questions did not address the extent to which people value intergenerational relations or whether they would want more or less experience of it. These are aspects that could feature in a specific study of equality, fairness and good relations.

The second part of our first research question asks how people's understanding of equality and fairness relates to their understanding of the Commission's core mandates. This has been explored in the focus groups, the results of which are in chapters three to five of this report.

### **Key drivers of attitudes**

The analysis of discrimination in Scotland by Bromley and Curtice (2003) explored economic, social and psychological models of attitudes. The broad question was whether discriminatory attitudes are driven by concerns about economic threat, by differences in people's social background (such as their age or education level), or by psychological factors derived from people's identity and the perceptions they have of people who are perceived to be different to themselves. All three were found to be important but the psychological model was particularly so. Abrams and Houston (2006) carried out a survey in 2005 exploring equality, diversity and prejudice in

Britain. The study set out to explore some key drivers of prejudice, many of which also derived from psychological theory. The areas selected were: categorisation, stereotypes, social identity, intergroup threat and values. One of their findings was that prejudice was less commonly expressed in relation to women, disabled people and older people and was more common in respect of black people, Muslims and gay men or lesbians; they argue that this might be because these latter three groups represent more of a cultural threat than the other groups do. Both these sources emphasise the role of explanations that go beyond simple analyses of factors traditionally associated with attitudes such as age, education or social class and instead sketch out a much more complex picture of drivers related to identity and beliefs about the role of different groups within communities. This highlights the significant link that exists between concepts such as fairness and equality on one hand, and good relations on the other.

Laurence and Heath (2008) carried out some extensive analysis of the Citizenship Survey that took account of individual and community characteristics to explore patterns of cohesion, using a number of the measures outlined. Although this does not explain the drivers of **attitudes to** cohesion, it is a helpful account of the factors which contribute to an individual's or community's sense of cohesion. Their overarching finding is that individual and community level factors are both important which demonstrates, for this concept at least, the importance of not considering individuals and communities as distinct or independent entities. For example, they found that ethnic diversity within an area fosters cohesion, in part because it helps to encourage friendships between people from different ethnic groups. However, the finding was somewhat complex as the exact nature of a community's composition and diversity was also a factor. In a similar vein, some of the positive drivers of cohesion included whether people participated in voluntary work and were part of social networks within their community, other factors that can help foster good relations between people. Socio-economic disadvantage also operates at the individual and community level adversely, with both having a negative impact on cohesion; this was particularly so for less diverse (predominantly white) deprived areas. Once again factors such as the extent of relations **between people** are critical rather than characteristics specific to individuals such as age, gender or education.

Garner et al. (2009) also discuss various key factors driving attitudes towards relations with ethnic minority groups, including: material conditions (where material conditions were worst, identity-related anxieties were the highest); frequency and type of contact with people from different ethnic backgrounds; and perceived competition for resources (housing, employment, benefits, territory and culture). They note that concerns about resources often underpinned comments which framed the white working class as the victims of 'unfairness' which perceives minorities being

advantaged. The relationship between material deprivation and low social capital is also noted in Letki (2007), who argues that research which suggests racial heterogeneity is damaging for a sense of community, has not adequately accounted for the intervening impact of a community's socio-economic status.

The review of attitudes to income inequality (Orton and Rowlingson, 2007) explored above also considered various explanations of attitudes which they classified as typifying: self-interest versus altruism, reference groups and relative deprivation, and empathy and socio-cultural distance. Some of these have similarities with Abrams and Houston's (2006) work in terms of highlighting the way in which group membership and the assigning of characteristics to supposed 'out-groups' can influence opinions. They also highlighted work that shows people's underlying beliefs about the causes of poverty or inequality are pivotal. For example, whether someone considers poor outcomes to be a consequence of bad luck or bad decisions or a lack of effort on the part of the individual, is very strongly associated with views about redistribution. In common with much of the cross-national literature discussed further below, they also conclude that people's underlying core values are of critical importance when it comes to understanding attitudes to these issues.

A number of other studies also highlight the importance of wider social values in framing social attitudes (Listhaug and Aalberg, 1999; Davidov, Schmidt, and Schwartz, 2008; Hunt, 2004; Vicario, Liddle and Luzzo, 2005; Sides and Citrin, 2007; Thorisdottir, Jost, Liviatan and ShROUT, 2007; Biancotti and D'Alessio, 2008; Kaltenthaler, Ceccoli and Gelleny, 2008). The established argument is that values are more deeply held and stable within people and are less likely to show rapid changes across contexts and time, whereas attitudes are more subject to flux. Values are commonly framed according to dimensions such as left-right or liberal-authoritarian (both of which are measured in the BSA, SSA, European Social Survey (ESS) and British Election Study series). Other measures exist, for example in relation to individualism, materialism and environmentalism (the work of Inglehart and the World Values Survey is particularly important here). Many of the cross-national analyses based on studies such as ESS have found values to be a greater predictor of attitudes than individual socio-demographic factors or regional/national contexts.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of this work is the question of how to include some measures of core values, which could, as the literature above suggests, potentially help meet the objective of identifying and understanding the drivers of people's views. The first step will be to determine what we mean by core values and which values will be of use in this context. The second will be to establish robust measures of these values. This may require any piloting stages to explore a wider set of values than will ultimately be required for the survey. It might also be necessary to

include a wider set in the first year in which the survey is run so that more thorough analysis of the role of values can be conducted than any pilot would allow.

The development of scales to measure underlying values requires extensive testing (often over a number of years) and is beyond the scope of the kind of questionnaire development that takes place as routine when new surveys on specific topics are developed. If values are indeed considered important for any new study of equality, fairness and good relations, an alternative to developing a bespoke measure would be to look to existing scales to fulfil that need. One measure of basic human values that has been robustly developed and tested in over 30 countries is worth considering for this purpose. Developed by Shalom Schwartz and included in the European Social Survey, the 'Human Values Scale' uses 21 self-completion questions to measure the following 10 dimensions of values (Schwartz 2006):

1. **Self-Direction** – Independent thought and action; choosing, creating, exploring.
2. **Stimulation** – Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.
3. **Hedonism** – Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.
4. **Achievement** – Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.
5. **Power** – Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.
6. **Security** – Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.
7. **Conformity** – Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.
8. **Tradition** – Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self.
9. **Benevolence** – Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact (the 'in-group').
10. **Universalism** – Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.

The dimensions can be categorised in terms of their degree of congruence and conflict with each other. For example, universalism and benevolence are highly congruent whereas the conformity and hedonism dimension conflict. The overall scale can be further categorised into two distinct and un-related dimensions: self-enhancement versus self-transcendence (which contrasts the pursuit of self-interest with concern for others) and openness to change versus conservation (which contrasts willingness to have new experiences with a desire for conformity). As the above discussion outlined, these kinds of values are strongly associated with attitudes (Schwartz also discusses the link between values behaviours) and are likely to prove valuable in a study of equality, fairness and good relations.

The significance of values, intra-community relations and the role of group identity raises the question of the extent to which the key research questions in this study will be regionally or geographically bound once other factors are controlled for. While these factors may vary in different regions, and some communities may be more likely to foster good relations than others, it is questionable that region or locality per se will be a critical factor. This doubt is supported by previous analysis of the BSA which looked at differences between regions in England and between urban and non-urban areas (Park et al., 2006). This used multivariate analysis to control for the different socio-economic composition of populations in these areas and found that differences in attitudes to, and experiences of, social cohesion (including perceptions of racial prejudice) were explained by the socio-economic composition of those areas and not by the regions per se. However (and perhaps more intuitively) region did make a difference in relation to people's perceptions of quality of life indicators (for example, transport and pollution). Much of the analysis of regional differences in a recent Citizenship Survey report also concluded that many differences between regions in England – and between Wales and England – were not significant once other factors were controlled for (Kitchen, Michaelson, Wood and John, 2006b). Similarly, an analysis of attitudes to gender equality in Scotland and England concluded that age and education are more significant drivers than country (MacInnes, 2005).

### **Areas worthwhile exploring at subsequent stages of the research**

#### ***The role of knowledge***

Numerous quantitative studies have shown that social knowledge is often found to have a significant association with attitudes to social issues. For example, Sides and Citrin (2007) used ESS data to demonstrate that people who overstate the number of immigrants within their country are more likely to have negative opinions about immigration than those who have more accurate knowledge of the situation. The effect was particularly strong among those who also thought that their country was taking in relatively more migrants than other countries. Taylor-Gooby and Hastie

(2002) explored support for public spending on welfare and social knowledge, based on a module in BSA. This showed there to be relatively widespread misperceptions about a number of social issues; for example, at the time of the survey in 2001, the public estimated 52 per cent of recorded crimes to involve violence (the reality was 22 per cent) and that 32 per cent of people in Britain were black or Asian (the reality was 7 per cent). This kind of questioning provides a contextual picture of survey participants' view of the world and can sometimes yield useful insights that might help account for their answers. In the BSA example the relatively low proportion of people who supported increased spending on unemployment benefits tended to also overestimate levels of child poverty and high incomes in Britain. Understanding equality is the key research question for this study, but it will also need to measure understandings of quite a wide range of related issues as well.

### ***Legitimizing beliefs***

One US study described a set of views common among people who oppose various equality measures as 'legitimizing beliefs' (Glaser, 2005). This study did not fit the main criteria for this review as it was based on analyses of the reasons given by elected officials for not supporting certain measures rather than a study of public understanding or attitudes. Glaser suggested that people who claim to support the principle of equality but who do not necessarily support measures to promote it rationalised this dissonance using legitimizing beliefs of the kinds set out below. Dissonance is a major area of study in social psychology. It is the discomfort that arises when someone is aware of holding two opposing views at the same time, for example an awareness that your behaviour is out of sync with your attitudes and beliefs. It wasn't entirely clear that the examples described in this study were always the result of an attempt to resolve a potential dissonance – they are also the kinds of justification that someone who simply disbelieves in the principle might make. However, the concepts identified looked like useful aspects to address in a survey of the public:

- denying, or questioning whether, inequality exists in the first place
- suggesting that measures to combat it violate wider social values (for example, not the American/British way of doing things)
- believing that ignoring differences is the best way to achieve equity/social harmony (linked to a move in California to prevent government from collecting information about people's racial background)
- believing that the costs associated with certain equality initiatives outweigh the benefits (US example was hate crime recording, which sits well with current debates about police time spent recording details of people who are stopped and searched).



The same study also raised the question of valence – how much importance people place on the issue of equality and fairness. We might want to explore where achieving equality sits in people’s hierarchy of desirable outcomes for society.

### ***Life course experiences***

Another area suggested by the literature that may be of use to the wider study is the issue of life course experiences. Changes in a society’s views over time are often characterised as either being the result of:

- cohort effects, where people of similar ages share attitudes and values throughout their life as a result of the social context in which they matured
- life course effects, whereby people’s views change as they age as a result of changing life experiences, and
- period effects, where major social developments affect a whole population’s attitudes.

Although, in reality, these effects can be simultaneous and hard to distinguish, some typical patterns include views around morality which are often determined by cohort, views about public spending which change as people join the workforce or become parents, and views about criminal justice which can often change as a result of a specific case.

One article, based on a study in the Netherlands, questioned traditional assumptions about life course change being largely a feature of younger people’s lives and found evidence of a correlation between life events and changing attitudes to equality issues (Poortman and VanTilburg, 2005). While the study design could not be used to measure direct causation, a number of steps were taken to avoid over interpretation. The key findings are that people’s unconventional life experiences and those of their children were associated with more socially liberal attitudes on issues such as gender equality. This suggests a number of areas in which direct and indirect experiences could shape attitudes to equality. In most of these areas the potential sources of influence are three-fold: experiences of the respondent’s parents, a respondent’s own experience, and that of their children or other close family members/friends. Possible influences include:

- employment history
- educational attainment
- parenting styles (such as paternal involvement in child rearing)
- relationship history (cohabitation, divorce, step-families, same-sex relationships)
- extent of social and cultural diversity in school or workplace.

Three key points emerge from this. Firstly, it might be valuable to include some discussion of life course events, particularly for the focus groups comprised of older generations, but also more broadly given the three ways in which these can operate. Secondly, the questionnaire might want to include some critical life course indicators as potential measures of drivers of attitudes. Finally, the Commission might want to consider exploring the potential for using longitudinal methods (possibly via existing sources such as the British Birth Cohort studies of 1946, 1958, 1970 and the Millennium Cohort study) to explore attitudes to equality issues over time.

### 2.3 Summary

- No studies currently exist that can fully answer the question of what people **understand** by the terms equality, fairness and good relations.
- Two issues arise when considering the issue of equality: between **whom** does it apply and **what** should there be equality of? The second of these is commonly discussed in terms of processes, outcomes and opportunities.
- Some studies focusing on specific contexts have more potential to answer the 'equality of what' question than studies primarily concerned with the issue of between whom it applies. However, it is not very easy to ask questions designed to elicit views about different types of equality without giving specific examples of the kinds of groups between whom equality might apply. Questionnaire space constraints, and respondent fatigue, could make this task hard to resolve.
- Any questionnaire on this topic will need to pay particular attention to the ways in which people understand and discuss these concepts, as well as the ways in which they have been framed in more theory-focused debates.
- Attitudes to economic inequality have been extensively researched in Britain. This work shows there to be: a high degree of concern about the extent to which inequality exists, support for measures to address it are less pronounced, and understanding of the issues involved is limited. These latter issues are likely to require addressing in any new study of equality, fairness and good relations.
- Extensive research about good relations and community cohesion also exists. But, most of these studies have pre-defined community cohesion, for example in terms of strength of belonging to neighbourhoods, social contact, respect and good relationships between people from different backgrounds, and levels of involvement in local communities. No studies have sought to discover how much value people place on good relations or what they think it comprises.

- Existing literature suggests that the main **drivers** of attitudes to equality, fairness and good relations are likely to include a combination of socio-demographic factors (such as age and education) and underlying core values and beliefs. Area or community level measures do not appear to be as significant as individual drivers.

### 3. Understandings of fairness, equality and good relations

This research has sought to explore the general public's understanding of terms that are abstract and for which there are no agreed definitions even among equalities stakeholders. The nebulous nature of the concepts referred to by the terms meant that focus group participants initially found it hard to engage with the discussion. In some cases, participants found little to say at all and required persistent prompting from the facilitator for a discussion to start. However, as discussions within groups progressed, they became much more engaged and participants entered into lengthy debates about the nature of fairness, equality and good relations and drew readily from their personal experiences. Nevertheless it was difficult to tease out clear lines of thought.

This chapter sets out an analysis of what people understood by the terms fairness, equality and good relations. It should be borne in mind that from the perspective of participants these concepts were invariably intertwined with each other and with particular examples or events.

#### 3.1 Understandings of fairness

Participants found it hard to speak about fairness in the absence of a definitive context, and the argument was made that, in fact, fairness was a term that had different definitions depending on the specific circumstances in which it was being used. In particular, it was felt that the nature and meaning of fairness was affected by whether it was being used in the context of the relationship between countries or in the context of social relations within countries.

Despite the fact that participants found it hard to talk about, as the discussions progressed it became apparent that two views of fairness were being articulated. The first was that fairness meant treating everybody the same. Within this view participants spoke about treating people 'equally' or about the importance of 'even handedness':

Everybody's 50/50 right down the middle. (Female, 18-25, Scotland)

In some cases participants expressed this view in terms of treating other people the way that they would want to be treated themselves or treating people in a way that is acceptable to everybody. This was sometimes elaborated on as being when people are treated the same no matter who they are, and several of the equalities strands – race, ethnicity, faith and disability – were raised spontaneously in relation to this.

While the first definition of fairness related to treating everybody the same, irrespective of who they are, the second definition related to treating people differently. Within this view, fairness was about treating everyone according to their individual needs or merits. Another way this was expressed was about treating people differently according to their particular circumstances or characteristics and making allowances for people's specific situation and requirements. For example the need of a wheelchair user to have wheelchair access to buildings is an example of someone being treated differently to everyone else but fairly:

...fairness for someone who isn't, because old people aren't the same, so if everything was the same for everyone, you've got someone who's disabled and they're getting the same as what everyone else is getting, then that wouldn't be fair? (Female, 18-25, England)

Within this context, participants also discussed how people have different 'values' and 'codes' and therefore what might be fair for one person may not be for another. Thus there were two different but closely aligned views of fairness: while one focused on treating people the same, the other had the same premise but explored the idea that to truly treat people the same you need to take account of, and respond to, difference.

### 3.2 Understandings of unfairness

It is notable that although there were two broad ways in which fairness was understood, in general participants struggled to define what it meant and found it easier to talk about what is **unfair**. This is apparent from the fact that participants spoke spontaneously about unfairness when asked to define fairness, but also because they gave more confident definitions of unfairness when prompted by the facilitator.

Again, there were two broad elements to defining unfairness. The first was when people are treated differently because of personal characteristics that are beyond their control. In this sense unfairness focused on the differences between people and the term **discrimination** was raised spontaneously in this context. In one group, participants took this definition even further and talked about unfairness existing even where one person feels that they are better than another, irrespective of whether they acted on those feelings or not. The term 'injustice' was also used to describe this aspect of unfairness and it was argued that people had an innate sense of when something was unfair:

It's when you think that someone just, you just, your gut just knows someone deserves better. (Male, 26-45, England)

The second element related to a disparity between what people put in to a system and what they took out. It was felt that there were some people who got the same treatment as everyone else but who didn't deserve it because they had not pulled their weight. This was spoken about in a number of contexts including unemployment and immigration:

But yet, you know, nothing against people that come into this country, but they've probably been here, what, two years? But yet, you know, they're given somewhere to live, benefits and things like that. And I just think we just need to look after our own a bit better before we, we start. (Female, 26-45, England)

When talking about unfairness, participants drew heavily on their personal experiences as well as things they had read about in the press or heard of from friends or family. In this respect, it is perhaps understandable that participants found it easier to talk about unfairness than fairness. Stories of injustice are what make the news and attract public interest, whereas fairness is rarely acknowledged in public discourse and, therefore, less likely to be at the forefront of people's minds.

### **3.3 Understandings of equality**

While participants found it hard to express what the concept of fairness meant to them, they found their views on equality even harder to articulate and fewer definitions were given in response to questions on equality. However, it is worth noting that participants were asked to discuss equality after they had already discussed fairness in each group. Since participants often felt there was little to separate the two terms, it is possible that had they been asked about equality first they may have given fuller answers. Where participants did offer definitions of equality, this strongly echoed their understanding of fairness, for example treating people the same. Equality was also defined as everyone pulling their weight:

F2: A fair days pay for a fair days work.

F1: Its like sharing a bag of toffees, isn't it?

F2: Yeah.

F1: You get ten, they get ten.

(Exchange between two females, 46-64, England)

These conversations were triggered by discussions about benefits, employment and immigration, which are explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

Where participants' understanding of equality most differed from that of fairness was when it was referred to as 'equality of opportunity'. This was a prominent theme and while it was also referred to as equal rights, chances or access, equality of opportunity was the most commonly used term. This is interesting since although the term is employed widely within policy debates, it is not perhaps one that you would expect to hear within groups of people without specialist knowledge or interest in the area. The fact that it featured so strongly is perhaps an example of equalities legislation and the language used around it filtering through into wider society.

Where people spoke about equal opportunities, they drew heavily on the various equalities strands and talked about people having the same opportunities no matter what their characteristics or background. There was also significant discussion about individuals being judged on their own merit. Implicit here was the suggestion that currently this doesn't always happen. This was particularly spoken about with reference to employment:

Women are down there and men are up there in employment stakes, whether it's because women are having babies or whatever, its trying to get the balance back... I mean if every person feels the same as the person next to them no matter what their differences, whether it's race, religion, age or disability, they should feel exactly the same. (Female, 18-25, England)

While it was argued that the same opportunities should be available to everyone, it wasn't necessarily thought that this should result in everyone achieving the same things. Underlying this was a sense that while opportunities should be available to everyone, it is up to individuals to take these opportunities and make something of them. Personal responsibility in relation to outcomes commonly resonated with participants, most notably in relation to immigration, benefits and employment:

Well, you can look at life as equality of opportunity and equality of outcome, so it should be we're given, like, equality of outcome would be everyone just getting paid off the same and, like, off the government and stuff, whereas equality of opportunity would be everyone having the chance to go through education and to work, so I think, I think we should have more equality of opportunities and less equality of outcome, I think, where people don't get the benefits just for doing nothing all their life. (Male, 18-25, England)

While unfairness was a term that came easily to participants, inequality was not used to nearly the same degree. It was referred to as the opposite of equality and particularly about people not being given the same chances or opportunities. However, equality was not defined using the concept of inequality in the same way as fairness was defined through unfairness. It is hard to say why this is, although it

may simply be that the terms 'unequal' and 'inequitable' are not as common in everyday language as 'unfairness'.

### 3.4 Understandings of good relations

Discussion of good relations was approached in a slightly differently way to the other two terms. While participants were initially asked to discuss their interpretation and experiences of fairness and equality, they were specifically asked for definitions of good relations. This was because it was felt good relations is a less common term and it would, therefore, be of interest to hear people's spontaneous response to it. In response to this, good relations was discussed on two levels, first what the term meant and second, the contexts in which good relations were thought to be played out.

In terms of what good relationship meant, three broad themes emerged. First, good relations was perceived to be about trust and respect. These were identified as key concepts and the importance of **mutual** trust and respect was underlined. Second, good relations was seen to be a product of people listening, empathising and taking account of each other's views. Participants spoke about the need for communication between people and for there to be give and take in a relationship:

I think something I learnt years ago is shut up and listen, rather than carry on. Let the other person talk, and let it go in, and then speak again. Cos it's quite easy just to ignore what they're saying and just be headstrong and think about what you want and that's it. (Male, 26-45, England)

Third, good relations was felt to be about people getting on with each other, acting as a team and pulling together. This included the need to look out for each other in times of trouble and was spoken about with particular reference to neighbourhoods and local communities.

Moving on to the contexts in which good relations were thought to be played out, three settings were identified. These were:

- **Within local communities.** This setting focused around getting on with neighbours and with friends and family. This included inter-generational relations and the need for younger and older members of a community to get along.
- **Within employment settings,** specifically the need for colleagues to have good relations and be able to have a 'working relationship'. This was one of the contexts in which the need for team working and pulling together was discussed. Here there was also reference to providers and consumers of services needing to have good relations.



- **In an international context.** The relationship between Britain and America was used as an example here and, in particular, the two countries working together to achieve peace. The particular emphasis on Britain and America appears to be because of the media coverage that the 'special relationship' between the two nations receives:

That's what you hear on the telly such good relations between the two countries. (Male, 26-45, Scotland)

### 3.5 Understanding the terms together

Having looked at how each of the three terms was interpreted individually, we now turn to exploring how participants understood them in relation to each other, including key similarities and differences. The terms were often used to define each other, for example, equality being defined as fairness and good relations being about fairness and equality. One reason for this was that fairness and equality were seen as simply the same thing. However, an alternative view was that they were not the same thing but were co-dependent:

M: It's good relations that bring equality.

F: If everybody was more understanding of each other and each others circumstances um... it would obviously make things a bit more equal and the world would get on better. (Exchange between male and female, 18-25, Scotland)

In contrast, the three terms were not seen as necessarily reliant on one another. Participants spoke, for example, about the possibility of having good relations without the need for equality:

...you could have a tremendous relationship with that multi-millionaire, and still be termed as a different 'class' in this country... You could be upper class. You could be middle class, and you could still have a good relationship. (Male, 46-64, Scotland)

They also spoke of how equality could be present without fairness:

You know, in Cuba for example, a doctor is paid the same salary as a man who sweeps the road. They're paid the same; all people are paid the same salary. Now, that's equality but is it fair? No. You know. It isn't, is it? (Female, 46-64, Wales)

It is notable that while it was not agreed that fairness and equality meant the same thing or were even reliant on each other, there was a high level of consensus that the

terms are very closely entwined. As noted earlier, even those participants who saw a distinction between the terms found it hard to say exactly what that distinction was.

In as far as participants were able to articulate difference between these concepts, the difference centred on the fact that fairness was something that occurred on a personal level whereas equality was something that applied at the level of 'society'. It was felt that equality could therefore be legislated for in a way that fairness could not. This was illustrated by the extent to which participants drew on personal experience while discussing fairness as compared with equality, and by explicit references to where the terms were said to apply:

Fairness is like being fair in a game, if you like. You know, seeing the other person's point of view. But equality is like a rule of law, in, almost. That's equal, you know. (Female, 65+, Wales)

The differences between fairness, equality and good relations, were easier to define. Participants saw a strong relationship between the three terms as a whole but identified a very separate set of meanings for good relations (as discussed above).

Abstract definitions of each term were not clearly articulated, and therefore the relation of each to the others was dependent on the context in which the terms were being used. The context in which fairness and equality were discussed varied depending on the examples that arose during each group discussion. For example, where employment was raised early in the discussion, this became a key focus and inevitably shaped the way the terms were defined. Equally, where groups had participants of different ethnic origins, the discussions tended to focus more on fairness and equality and its prevalence in British society as compared with other international settings.

It is worth acknowledging here that participants' understanding of these concepts has relatively little to say about the dimensions of inequality that underpin the EMF and the single equality concept. But implicit in participants' discussions of fairness is the notion that achieving equality of process could, in practice, involve treating people the same or treating them differently, and that the latter may be justified in certain circumstances. But there are two sides to this: treating people differently to create equality of opportunity and unequal treatment (for example, because some people are felt to be less deserving).

Here, participants' views could be both in tune with and at odds with the single equality concept. It is clear from this research that treating people the same and treating them differently were not seen as mutually exclusive. Crucially, there is implicitly some support for the idea of creating equality of opportunity through

differential treatment. However, it is clear that communication is paramount to reduce mythology around positive discrimination, which is preventing people from engaging with and supporting the concepts underpinning existing legislation.

In fact, the stakeholder seminars focused heavily on the vital role of education in creating support for equality and fairness. Some of the views expressed by focus group participants do indicate that there is a need for education, specifically in relation to procedural unfairness and how resources are and are not allocated (as the next chapter will underline).

### **3.6 Summary**

- Understanding of the concepts of equality, fairness and good relations are related to both personal experiences and perceptions and the context in which they are discussed.
- There are two broad views of fairness: the first saw fairness as treating everyone the same regardless of their characteristics; the second saw it as treating people differentially according to their characteristics.
- Equality is broadly split into equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. While the first of these is seen as desirable the second is seen as neither desirable nor achievable.
- Good relations is understood in three contexts: in the community, in an employment context and in international relations. The predominant public discourse around good relations is based on a community level and discussion about people getting on with each other, and neighbourliness.
- The three concepts of fairness, equality and good relations are seen as being distinct from each other yet highly interwoven and, at times, interdependent.
- Although fairness and equality are sometimes used interchangeably, there is an understanding that fairness is something that occurs on a personal level, between individuals and communities, whereas equality is something that can be legislated for and happens on a bigger scale.
- Of the three concepts, fairness is the one that people feel most comfortable using.
- Participants' understanding of these concepts bore little relation to the single equality concept and may be at odds with it.

## 4. Attitudes towards fairness, equality and good relations

Perceptions of the extent to which fairness, equality and good relations exist in Britain varied greatly both between and within groups. Participants were asked to comment on their attitudes to fairness, equality and good relations on a number of different levels. In Scotland and Wales, for example, participants were asked to think about these concepts in both a Scottish or Welsh and a British context. This inevitably shaped participants' responses. Discussions were also influenced by whether participants talked about Britain on its own or in relation to other countries. While the context in which the discussions took place played a key role in how participants articulated their attitudes, a number of external drivers emerged as having an influence on attitudes. This chapter explores public attitudes to these concepts and examines what might be helping to shape them.

### 4.1 To what extent do fairness, equality and good relations exist in Britain?

#### How fair is Britain?

Participants found it difficult to make definitive statements about whether Britain was fair or unfair, partly because, as discussed in Chapter 3, they were not always sure exactly what fairness is, but also because they felt that the presence or absence of fairness is very much dependent on the context. However, there was also a view that fairness was in fact an **ideal** and something that could never be achieved in practice, and, therefore, the question was in some sense a moot one:

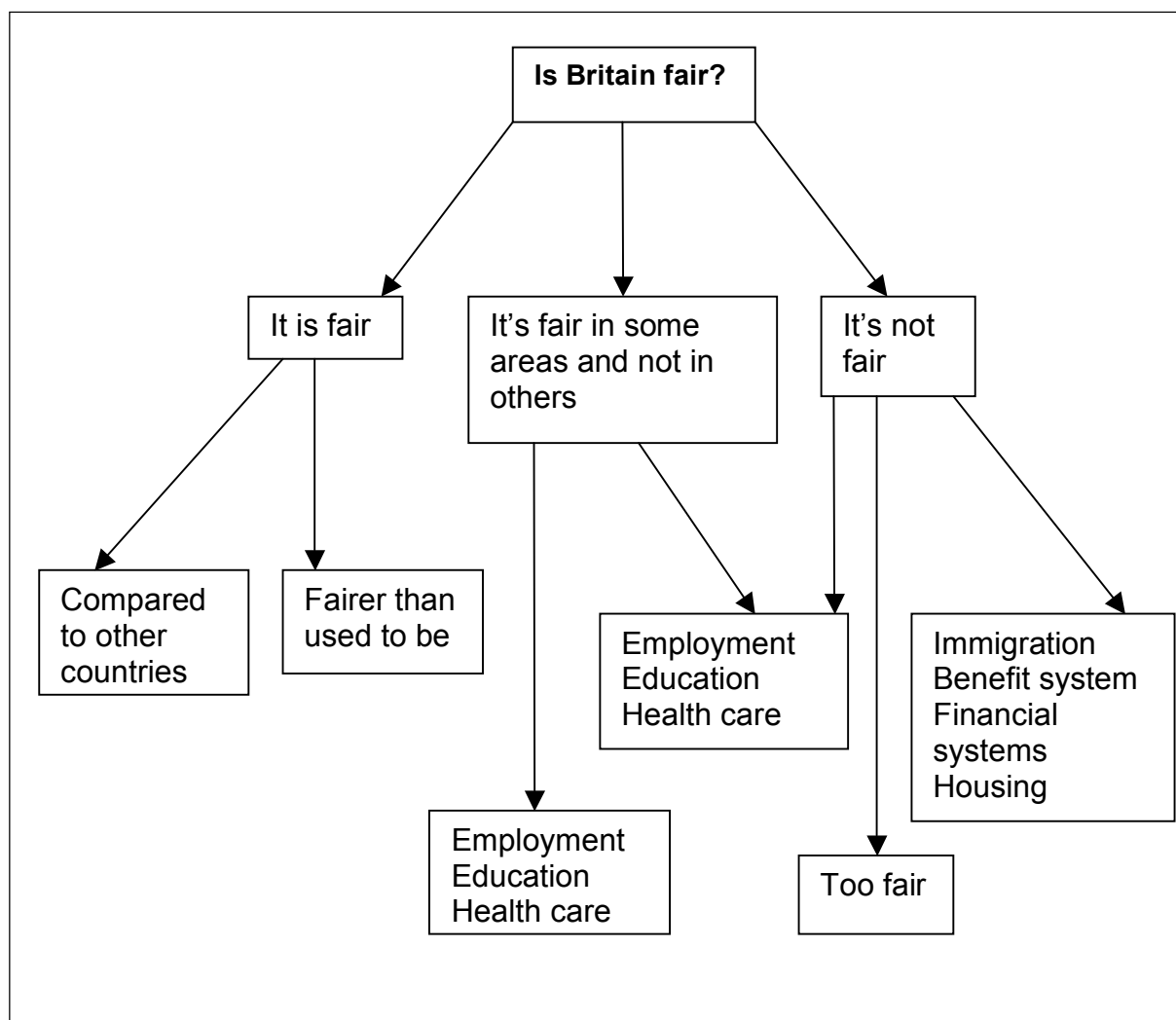
I start from the premise that life isn't fair. (Female, 65+, England)

After discussion, however, three main stances on whether Britain was fair emerged. The first was that Britain **was fair**, the second was that Britain was **fair in certain areas but not in others** and the third was that Britain was categorically **not fair**. Figure 4.1 gives an overview of respondents' views in relation to the extent of fairness in Britain.

As can be seen, those who thought **Britain was fair** did so for one of two reasons. First, Britain was perceived as fair compared to other countries. In this context, perceptions of fairness were related to differences in the standard of living, between Britain and African countries for example, or differences in the provision of public services, between Britain and the USA for example:

We're lucky enough, although we may disagree with the way the National Health Service is run, and understaffed and underfinanced and everything else, we're lucky that we can just walk in off the street and say 'help me'.  
(Male, 26-45, England)

**Figure 4.1 Range of views on the extent of fairness in Britain**



Second, the Britain of today was being compared with Britain in the past, which meant that while not necessarily meeting the ideal, it was considered fairer than it used to be. Fairness in this context was related to tolerance and understanding of others and a greater awareness of the equality agenda, which meant it was felt there was less of a ‘them and us’ attitude towards minority groups:

I think things have changed, obviously coming from my point of view as being a gay man, things have changed... things like Section 28, things like that. When I came out at school, I couldn't discuss anything with my teachers, but now obviously things are a lot fairer for children... things are more accepted. I think it's [Britain] a very fair place to live. (Male, 18-25, Wales)

The second stance that emerged was that **Britain was fair in some areas but unfair in others**. Here fairness and unfairness were related to particular policy domains, such as education and crime and justice, with some being perceived as fair

and others unfair. Education and health care were areas where Britain was perceived to be fair, despite an acknowledgement that there was a dual system of state and private provision. Fairness was felt to exist because there was a viable alternative to private provision for those who could not afford it. While people spoke explicitly about how employment law had addressed issues of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender, there was less explicit discussion about the relationship between employment law and disability. Participants described how they felt employment laws were fair, but the way people use them and treat each other is unfair. An example of this was a discussion about employment law and ethnicity where a participant described how he felt at an advantage if he stated he was Jewish on a job application form, which he believed was unfair. This view was shared by other participants across the groups.

The third stance was that **Britain was not fair**. Those adopting this stance fell into two main groups. First there were those who largely focused on the same areas as those taking the second stance; that Britain was fair in some areas and not others. Second there were those who felt that Britain had become too fair to the point of creating unfairness.

The difference between the first of these two groups and those taking the second stance was primarily not related to the area of unfairness or the reasons for unfairness but rather to the degree of emphasis placed on those areas. For those who thought that Britain was not fair, these areas were so important, their overall judgement was that Britain was not fair. Perhaps not surprisingly, one of the areas highlighted here was immigration. Although there was some acknowledgment that immigrant workers themselves were treated unfairly, as they were paid less and took the jobs people born in the UK would not do, there was a clear sense among participants that immigrants were treated 'more fairly' than themselves. This is interesting because it highlights that people don't see fairness and unfairness as polemic. Rather there appears to be a scale of fairness, with the ability for some people to be treated more fairly than others. In this instance the discussion focused on the idea that some people were treated 'too fairly' because they were perceived to receive help from a system to which they did not contribute, and that this translated as unfairness for others.

It is important to note that when immigration was discussed, there was no clear distinction between immigrants, economic migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and EU nationals. These terms were conflated and it was, therefore, unclear which 'immigrant group' participants were referring to. Immigration was largely discussed in relation to three areas: **housing, employment** and **benefits**. For example, participants described how they found it difficult to find employment because

positions had been given to people who were not born in the UK and were willing to work for less. Similarly, people who were waiting on housing lists strongly believed the reason why they did not have a flat was because they were allocated to immigrants first:

M: Now my mum's been on the council [list] at least... five or six years, and all they keep doing is shoving her into one bedroom flats here, there and everywhere, right. She's constantly on standby cases, she's never got permanent [housing]. I think that's where this country goes down and if you're a foreigner you come in this country, they give you money, they give you a house, they give you a car... I don't like the way this country treats its own people. (Male, 18-25, England)

Perceived unfairness also extended to benefit provision. Participants believed that they received fewer benefits than immigrant workers, and felt it was unfair that immigrants should receive so much when they had not contributed anything to the system.

However, there were also participants who felt that in fact 'fairness' had gone too far, and that now Britain was too fair. This belief was based on the feeling that minority groups were treated too favourably, which was 'unfair' for the majority. Inappropriate approaches to equality, such as positive discrimination, were seen as pervasive. A related view was that the government was trying too hard to be seen to be doing the 'right thing':

M: ...there are times when I think Britain is too fair. You know, we bend over backwards to implement rules that are imposed by the EEC. (Male, 65+, Scotland)

M: ...Trying to make it fair makes it unfair... sometimes they [government] go over the top by making... trying to make it fair for other people, and it shifts the balance... that can often create racism. (Male, 26-45, Scotland)

Embedded in these perceptions is the notion of deserving and undeserving groups within the population. Groups characterised as undeserving fell into three main, sometimes overlapping, categories. First there were people practising religions other than Christianity, particularly Muslims. In this instance the term too fair was not used but implied when people spoke about bending over backwards and going further for Muslims than they would for Christians. Second, 'foreigners' were seen as being given preferential treatment. For example, it was suggested that Britain is fair 'if you're foreign', or that foreigners were getting jobs and that was not fair because they haven't paid tax and National Insurance. Because they were seen as not having contributed to the system, there was a view that they are, if not undeserving, then less deserving than British Nationals. Third, there were people who don't work but

who use the welfare system. Anyone seen as taking more out of the system than they are putting in was seen as undeserving (this could include foreigners). Conversely, deserving groups implicitly included those with Christian beliefs, British Nationals and those who give a lot to the system. Interestingly the issue of 'foreigners' being given preferential treatment was discussed in groups both with and without participants from an ethnic minority group.

The notion that something is too fair certainly wasn't raised in all groups. However, when it was raised by particular individuals within groups there was generally ready agreement to it as a point. It is possible, of course, that some respondents may have felt reluctant to voice such views, because they were worried about how it would be viewed (for example as racism or discrimination). This is a danger in any research but especially so when the focus is on these concepts. On the other hand, the notion that some people are more or less deserving than others, was consistently raised. It is reasonable to argue that when people were talking about things being too fair they were essentially referring to the notion of positive discrimination and certain groups being given preference over others. The term 'too fair' was not something that people would necessarily use in their daily lives, but a response to the language that they encountered in these group discussions and a result of not knowing quite how to articulate thoughts around differential treatment, which they felt to be unfair.

In one of the Welsh groups there was a clear rural/urban divide. Participants in this group described how they felt it was unfair that the European Funding Office was moving to an urban location in Wales in order to centralise it. Unfairness in this instance was related to the fact that people felt they were losing high quality jobs, which would impact on their local economy.

Unfairness in relation to employment was also felt to arise where people were denied jobs on the basis of certain characteristics, such as age or gender (discussed more below). However, positive discrimination was also described as unfair. No conceptual distinction was made between positive discrimination and other forms of discrimination. The overarching concern was that an individual's characteristics, for example, their race, sexual orientation or disability, should have no bearing on their ability to get a job.

Unfair treatment of people was also discussed in relation to crime and punishment, health care and the benefit system. For example, there was a perception that criminals are often treated better than victims and sentences do not match the crimes. The 'post code lottery' and uneven distribution of medicines were also perceived as unfair. Older participants, in particular, felt that people who had worked all their lives should be treated better and given more support in relation to the costs of health care and care homes. This was a view that was echoed when discussing



benefits as people spoke about paying into the system all their lives and not receiving anything in return. Abuse of the benefit system was also described as unfair.

Education was rarely mentioned spontaneously by participants as being unfair in Britain. However, when prompted, they did discuss unfair treatment of students as they felt disruptive students were rewarded for bad behaviour and low achievers were often labelled and forgotten about, resulting in fewer opportunities. Different standards between schools were also highlighted as being unfair, as participants felt schools that were a higher standard offered better opportunities to students, and parents had no choice as to where to send their children, unless they could afford to pay.

In the Welsh groups there was specific mention of the perceived uneven distribution of resources between North and South Wales and between Wales and the rest of Britain. Participants in North Wales felt they were largely excluded and a forgotten part of the country with the majority of resources being distributed to South Wales:

M: There is no resources in North Wales. I mean, we are a forgotten part of the country, we really are. In fact, actually, why we call ourselves Wales at all, I don't really know, really. (Male, 65+, Wales)

Similarly, in the Scottish groups there was a discussion about how they felt the media portrayed Scotland as 'subsidy junkies' when in fact they believed resources were largely directed at London and the South East of England.

Among participants who felt Britain was unfair, two different types of unfairness emerged. The first was based on how people were treated in relation to others. This could include treating minority groups unfairly or treating minority groups better than others at the expense of the majority. The second related to the systems that were in place. For example, people described how it was unfair that people were allowed to abuse the system, whereas others felt it was the system itself that was unfair. These definitions of unfairness relate to the point that a minority group being treated fairly can be regarded as something that happens at the expense of the majority, and interpreted as being 'too fair'.

### **How equal is Britain?**

Participants found it easier to decide whether Britain is equal than whether it is fair. This is interesting given that participants found equality harder to define than fairness. Although participants did acknowledge that there was greater equality in Britain than in other countries and that legislation was improving the situation, there was a general consensus that overall Britain was not equal, as the following responses illustrate:

I: Is Britain equal?

F: No.

F: No, definitely not. (Females, 46-64, England)

M: The world isn't equal. (Male, 18-25, Wales)

M: No, it isn't though, is it? It will never be equal for everyone, there will always be people left out. (Male, 18-25, England)

Two main views emerged in relation to equality in Britain. The first related to how people were **treated** based on certain characteristics. In this instance participants spoke about how Britain was not equal as minority groups are still treated differently. All the equality strands were raised spontaneously in relation to this. For example, people described personal experiences of being treated negatively based on their sexual orientation or ethnicity, while others discussed unequal treatment between men and women in relation to employment and differences in wages. Disability was also raised in relation to employment as people described how disabled people were not treated equally and often denied job opportunities. Similarly, people described how there was still a 'them and us' mentality. This was particularly noticeable in relation to class where participants talked about how the 'rich are too rich and the poor are too poor.'

The second factor shaping people's views on equality related to **access** and **opportunities**. It was felt that Britain was not equal as certain groups or individuals had access or opportunities that others do not. Education and health care were particular areas where people felt there was inequality of access and opportunity. While one view was that education allowed people to become more equal as it opened up possibilities, another was that the existence of private education and health care created inequality, because it resulted in a division between people and provided some people with more opportunities or a better start in life:

F: I think you get a better education in private schools and you've got more opportunities at the end of it. (Female, 65+, England)

M: If equality was in it, if equality is anything to do with [it], everybody would have a good education... you wouldn't have to pay for the education. (Male, 65+, England)

Although the existence of private education and health care was considered to be unfair, perceived differences in relation to public services were also felt to be unfair. For example, higher education was seen to be unfair because university was often only available to those who could afford to pay. In relation to health, participants in

the English groups felt that the absence of prescription charges in Scotland and Wales created inequality across Britain.

This focus on education and health care in relation to equality is important because it highlights the differences in public attitudes to fairness and equality. So while health and education systems were seen as broadly **fair** they were not seen as **equal**. The perception of fairness was driven by the idea that within both services, everyone is treated the same. But personal circumstances dictate that some service users are able to access private health care and education while others are not. This was seen as inequitable because equality is about people having the same chances, access and opportunities.

### **Are there good relations in Britain?**

Chapter 3 highlighted that understanding of good relations existed on three levels: locally, in employment and internationally. Of these three levels, local, or community-based good relations were the most resonant for participants.

Three main themes emerged as having an impact on the prevalence of good relations at a local level: the size of the community, the composition of the community and societal changes. It emerged that good relations were felt to have decreased over the years. Participants from both rural and urban areas identified a definite urban/rural split. It was felt that good relations were more common in small towns and villages. For example, people living in rural areas spoke of helping one another 'in wee villages we all pull together', and speaking to one another in the street. There was a feeling that the sense of community spirit was lost in larger towns and cities with no one taking the time to look out for their neighbours:

I think they have lost a lot of community spirit in towns and cities now. The village where XXX lives is definitely a lot friendlier. Everybody speaks to each other. (Male, 46-64, Scotland)

Closely linked to the size of the community was composition. Participants felt that immigration made it difficult to form good relations because different ethnic groups did not mix with each other. In Scotland sectarianism was perceived as limiting good relations in communities as people judged each other on the basis of their religion and what football team they supported, which created tensions in communities. Stereotyping was also considered to impact on good relations. For example one participant described how people treat Muslims as one homogeneous group and view them all as terrorists:

...[there's] a lack of mixing... you've got one community here and one community there and there's not much mixing then the people build up

ideas about the other community which may not be true... I think we're looking at sort of racial or religious communities when they feel insecure and tend to establish themselves in enclaves with people from similar backgrounds, similar beliefs and therefore you get that sort of ghetto mentality and people become suspicious. (Male, 46-64, England)

Participants in the Scottish groups also discussed how they were treated in England. They described how they felt people were suspicious of them when they heard their Scottish accent and often reverted to stereotypical language such as 'Och aye the noo' when talking to them. However, this was viewed as being two sided as they acknowledged that they had perceptions of parts of England as being 'snobby' and 'uppity'.

Older participants in particular felt that good relations had diminished over time because people no longer had time for each other and young people lacked manners. However, some younger participants also shared the view that good relations had changed over time. For example, they spoke about fighting between different local gangs, which they felt had not existed when they were younger:

... gangs in [area] that are all fighting, the neighbour gangs and... I don't know where it's come from because I used to live in [area] and we used to all just hang around... the streets and didn't get in a lot of trouble... and 10 years later... you can't go out the streets at nine o'clock at night, and I don't understand where it's come from. (Female, 18-25, England)

International relations were also a feature of discussions. Britain's part in the European Union was seen as a cause of good relations as was Britain's relationship with America. However, there was a sense that Britain had bad international relations too. The invasion of Iraq was cited in this context.

#### **4.2 The importance of the equality strands**

The previous section highlighted the features that people described as being fair or unfair and equal or unequal in Britain. The examples that people gave inevitably related to some of the equality strands. And although all of the strands were discussed across the groups, some of them resonated more than others in people's personal lives and in relation to individual experiences and characteristics. This section will look at each of the strands in more detail and explore the extent to which they were seen as relating to fairness, equality and good relations.

For the purposes of this research the Commission's equality strands are understood to be age, gender, disability, ethnicity/race, sexual orientation and religion/belief. Other issues that were closely related to the Commission's remit or considered important by the participants who took part in the groups were also explored such as

social class. Although participants related fairness and equality to all six of the equality strands this was not the case for good relations. This could be due to the fact that, as discussed in Chapter 3, participants had a broader understanding of good relations.

### **Age**

This strand was raised spontaneously in relation to both fairness and equality. Older people thought it was unfair that young people no longer had respect for their elders and felt they used bad language and lacked manners. Perhaps not surprisingly, young people's perspectives differed. There was a sense of unfairness on the part of younger participants who spoke about feeling stereotyped by older people on the basis of their appearance:

They have misconceptions of people, because of things that have happened in society... they think oh well, that person did that and he was wearing a hoodie, so we'll blame all hoodies, that's the way it is and it's just... very unfair. (Male 18-25 Wales)

Grannies, you know what I mean, old grannies and middle aged people are scared shitless, they've got to go to the opposite side of the road if they walk past one [someone wearing a hoodie] and I think it's stupid. (Male, 18-25, Wales)

Both older and younger participants raised the issue of employment discrimination. For younger people this was related to the fact that they felt they were not always respected or listened to in work due to their age, whereas older participants described being denied job opportunities on account of their age. Older participants did, however, consider the fact they received free bus passes and free prescriptions once they reached 60 as an indication of fair treatment.

### **Race/ethnicity**

Participants who argued that Britain was fair in relation to race and ethnicity and those who felt it was not both drew on personal experiences to support their arguments. Negative experiences were felt to be connected to both physical appearances and cultural indicators:

I think there's a lot of discrimination and prejudice. My dad's from the Middle East, and we have, our family have had a lot of problems in the past, and my dad's lived in this country since he was 20... and I find especially with my name as well, I do get a lot of prejudice and especially when I was at school, and I find that it is unfair... when we were at school... a lot of people were racist that my dad was from the Middle East, and we used to get picked on... we used to get bullied... as soon as I say

that my dad's from Iraq, they think of terrorists straightaway. (Female, 18-25, England)

The stereotype of Muslims being terrorists was an issue that was raised in a number of the groups. There was a sense that the media was largely to blame for distorting people's perceptions. It was also suggested that the law itself was fair but that ignorance and a lack of education leads to negative treatment and stereotyping. In some cases it was felt that while the law was fair, those who implemented it, and particularly the police, were not always free from discrimination:

I think it's unfair because I think it happens to everyone. I think if you speak to, to the majority of ethnic minority people in [this area] and probably all over Britain, they will have a similar thing where they feel like they've been discriminated against by the police and they should have a specific department that deals with race-related complaints. (Female, 18-25, England)

In contrast, participants also described good experiences which were cited as evidence that Britain is a fair country:

I'm from Zimbabwe, and Britain has looked after me very well... I'm quite happy to be here... Britain is very fair. I've never, never been segregated because of where I come from or my colour or anything, so because of that, Britain is very fair. (Male, 65+ England)

### Gender

This strand was discussed solely in relation to unfairness within employment and was raised by both male and female participants. People's views of unfairness were based on the different treatment of men and women. Two main issues emerged. First, the difference in retirement age between men and women was considered unfair by participants as they felt this should be determined by ability to work rather than gender. Second, the fact that men and women earned different wages for doing the same role was perceived as unfair. However, as noted previously, there was also a sense that legislation was having an impact on gender discrimination in employment.

### Disability

Both disabled participants and non-disabled participants raised this strand as an issue but disability was rarely mentioned spontaneously, which could suggest that either people view this strand as less of an important social issue than some of the other strands, or that they had fewer personal experiences of it. When prompted, participants did discuss disability in relation to two main areas: **access**, both in terms of physical access and access to employment opportunities; and, **treatment** by others on the basis of their disability. In terms of **access** people discussed how it was

unfair that not all buildings were wheelchair friendly. Perceived unfairness in relation to access also extended to people being denied access to employment opportunities. This was particularly discussed in relation to people with mental health conditions and learning disabilities. The second area related to the **treatment** of disabled people by others. There was a sense among participants that disabled people were still treated differently and against the shared definition of fairness outlined in Chapter 3 where everyone should be treated the same; this was seen as unfair behaviour:

I just remember once... we all went to this bar, and there was this young guy and he was disabled, and they wouldn't let him into the bar because he was disabled. He says, oh, we don't let people like you come into this bar... it was appalling to see that, and I think really that was very unfair... everybody should be treated the same. It doesn't matter if you have a disability or what nationality, really, you know. Everybody should be treated the same and all equally. (Female, 18-25, England)

### **Sexual orientation**

This strand was discussed spontaneously in a number of groups. It was evident that it was usually raised by lesbian, gay or bisexual participants who had personal experiences of unfairness or inequality in relation to this characteristic. However, it was also discussed by other members of the group who shared different characteristics. Two main perspectives emerged, first in relation to the law and second, on a personal or individual *level*. In relation to the law, participants' accounts revealed a sense that things were improving with the introduction of new legislation, for example in relation to employment. However, it was argued that more needed to be done in certain areas, such as the armed forces:

Like equal rights for the gay community, for example, in the armed forces, there's men and women gave their lives, and, and they still do, yet... they had to be quiet about it. Whereas now they can be a little bit more open, but, you know, what does it matter whether they're gay or straight... I think there's still changes that need to happen, but movement is happening there. (Female, 26-45, England)

On a personal or individual level people's accounts were more negative, as they spoke about how a gay couple would be unable to walk down the street holding hands, and described personal experiences of being physically or verbally abused on the basis of their sexual orientation:

I mean I go out dressed like this and get called a queer or a faggot, do you know what I mean, and that's not fair. Cause you should be able to wear what you want, do what you want without people coming up to you in the street and judging you. (Male, 18-25, Wales)

Such negative experiences were associated with 'small minded people' and 'prejudice' and highlighted the need for more education and understanding.

### **Religion or belief**

Participants discussed this strand spontaneously when talking about fairness and unfairness. People described the different organisations that provided support for people of different faiths as something they considered to be fair. Two themes emerged in relation to unfairness; how different religions are portrayed and whether people can display religious symbols. Participants shared the view that the media could perpetuate unfairness by portraying certain religions negatively:

I think it's [the media] manipulating people's minds... and before you know it it's creating small little rifts... to use examples... some teacher resigned over a multi-race assembly, but that's just probably a very small minority... and the headlines are 'Muslims are refusing to go to a normal assembly'. Course, everybody is talking about it as if all the Muslims are causing trouble... that kind of media is very unfair... the media really, got a lot to answer for. (Male, 26-45, England)

The second theme related to displaying religious symbols. One perspective was that it was unfair that people were unable to wear religious symbols in schools. In comparison, it was felt people had to respect other people's beliefs and it was unfair for them to try and impose their religious beliefs on others.

### **Social class**

In addition to the six equality strands participants also discussed examples of unfairness in relation to social class. It was felt that class was still a big issue in society and there was still a 'them and us' mentality. Unfairness in this context was related to the perception that people in the upper or middle classes had more opportunities in terms of education and employment. It was also felt that there was less social mobility than there had been in the past. Views on unfairness also related to treatment of people, underpinned by the view that people were stereotyped on the basis of where they live. Similarly, participants felt that people who lived in 'posher' areas were treated better by the council:

My parents live in a posh area of XXX and I notice that they get a lot done, they get like their street lighting is all white lights, they took away all the yellow lights years ago that the rest of us have in the city. And the streets are cleaned, there are men in the streets on a daily basis... I always joke to my parents that if you live in a nice part you get more looked after; the council keep these places nice. (Female, 26-45, Scotland)



### 4.3 Factors that shape attitudes

As might be expected, views on fairness, equality and good relations were formed through a variety of influences and factors. While it is impossible to completely unpick how these influences work, it is possible to identify some of the factors that had a strong impact. The following section discusses some of the elements that came out as clearly having a bearing on attitudes

As discussed above, personal characteristics played a role in informing views on fairness, equality and good relations and influenced the examples that people gave. In some cases, individual characteristics had a direct correlation to views but it is important to stress that views were not shaped by individual characteristics alone or by any one personal characteristic. A range of attitudes came out from across the groups regardless of background. One area where personal characteristics appeared to influence people's views were in discussions around age as an equality strand. There were clear differences in what people perceived to be unfair, dependent on participants' ages. Despite this, no other discernable patterns were identifiable in relation to gender, educational attainment or age. The relationship between personal characteristics and attitudes was far more complex than this and it was clear that all facets of an individual's personality and experiences influenced their attitudes on the subject.

While personal experiences were frequent in discussions of unfairness and inequality, they were also used as examples of perceived fairness. For example, to illustrate that Britain is fairer than in the past, participants shared positive experiences of sexual orientation and employment. The following account highlights how people's attitudes were shaped by personal experiences:

I had the same... well saying that... I wouldn't have been able to come [out], even now I wouldn't have been able to come out at school, but with regards to workplace, things like that, university and stuff, it's all fine, I've never had any trouble, no I think Britain's quite fair. (Female, 18-25, Wales)

Upbringing and family life were also cited as factors that could influence people's views on fairness and equality.

I mean what, what... you think are right and wrong and equal varies, if you, you're brought up knowing that's right, that's wrong, that's fair and you've got a lot to do with how you're brought up and where you're brought up. (Male, 18-25, England)

Similarly, it was argued that parents or peers could influence people's views on fairness and equality:

I think a lot of this started at home, with parents teaching the children good values. Because if you've got parents saying, you know hate all the gays, hate all the Muslims... that child's going to grow up like that and have those views right the way through [life]. (Male, 46-64, England)

The media influenced both the extent to which people felt Britain was equal and the areas focused on within discussions. While some participants explicitly acknowledged that their views were shaped by stories in the media, others gave examples of things that they considered to be fair/unfair or equal/unequal in relation to events that had been in the news. The media appeared to be particularly influential in shaping people's attitudes towards unfairness in relation to immigration, employment and housing.

I blame the media for everything... because they bring out hatred in people, they use propaganda to manipulate people's minds... and general people they accept, they see someone say with a big beard or something like that, immediately terrorist or someone who's Muslim terrorist. (Male, 18-25, Wales)

Unsurprisingly, the perception that fairness, equality and good relations were unachievable ideals was associated with perceptions of inequality and unfairness. Participants who felt that fairness, equality and good relations were unachievable, more readily found examples of unfairness, inequality and bad relations in society.

Finally, the group dynamic had a clear impact on attitudes. This was most noticeable when the groups discussed specific examples. The fact that this happened indicates that there is the capacity for people's attitudes to change on issues around fairness, equality and good relations. This is explored further in Chapter 6.

#### **4.4 The importance of fairness, equality and good relations**

While fairness and equality may not be seen as fully attainable, they are regarded as important:

Oh, I think it's [equality] is really important to strive for it, but it's also important to recognise that the likelihood is it will never happen. (Female, 18-25, Wales)

These two outcomes were seen as playing a role in relieving unrest, discontent and resentment. And in helping society to function better:

I also think the more we can work in partnership with each other, the more we can improve our own lives... without that communication of fairness, of respect... you're not going to get people to see somebody else's perspective, or somebody else's point of view. (Female, 25-45, England)

Good relations were regarded as important for the same reason. There was a suggestion that without good relations there would be anarchy and animosity. Good relations were seen as an important part of everyday life and something that made society tick.

While fairness, equality and good relations were widely acknowledged as important to society, there were more nuanced views of the distinctive role of each concept and suggestions that they were not always desirable.

This can be illustrated by a distinction that was made between the need for equal **opportunities** and equal **outcomes**. Equal opportunities were seen as both more attractive and more realistic, with equal outcomes being regarded as neither possible nor desirable. This was based on the premise that everyone has different abilities, so people are not capable of achieving the same things. However, it was thought to be important that people are given the opportunities to fulfil the potential that they have. There was also the suggestion that equality of outcomes would make for a flat and less pluralistic society described in one group as ‘communism’. The implication here was that a focus on equality of outcome could be a constraining force in relation to opportunities and aspirations, which could be perceived or experienced as unfair. The overarching message was that everyone, regardless of individual characteristics, should be given the same opportunities but that this may not result in people achieving the same outcomes. Respondents did not make a distinction between individual or group outcomes. It is interesting to note here that participants’ views present a potential challenge to the notion of tackling inequality of outcome – as either impossible or undesirable.

Linked to this was the idea that universal fairness is perhaps not desirable either. It was suggested that the world would be a ‘very boring place’ if everything was fair and that unfairness could be positive if it made people strive for a better life:

Unfairness kind o’ makes people... er... strive to get better. Like sometimes you need a wee bit of hardship. Like everything can’t be like... easy-peasy. (Female, 18-25, Scotland)

There were also discussions about fairness and equality being taken **too** far in the form of **positive discrimination**. This was perceived as unfair action that led to resentment towards minority groups.

Where discussions focused on equality and fairness being less important or having negative outcomes, it was also acknowledged that both would become an important issue for anyone on the receiving end of unfairness or inequality:

I: How important are they [fairness and equality] to you?

M: To me, as I say, I'm just one of them who just carry on coping. I just carry on, doesn't matter what.

F: If we were at the receiving end of unfairness or inequality they would soon become important. (Exchange between Male and Female, 46-64, Wales)

In order to further explore the importance of equality, fairness and good relations in relation to other social outcomes, participants were given 15 show cards (see Appendix C) with different examples on and asked to select the three most important and the three least important and explain why they had made their choices.

While all the issues made it into the top three with the exception of better public transport, there were four that stood out as being clearly important. These were 'equal health care for everyone', 'good education for everyone', 'a thriving economy' and 'tougher punishment for crime'. Interestingly the two that never made it into the bottom three were a 'thriving economy' and 'good race relations', while 'higher tax for higher earners', 'better public transport', 'low gas and electricity prices', 'environmentally friendly behaviour' and a 'higher minimum wage' were all recurrent issues in the bottom three across the groups.

The top three choices reflected earlier discussions around fairness and equality as participants described how health care and education should be available to everyone in order to try and make things more equal. They also perceived education to be at the root of various societal problems and viewed it as a means to address some of these issues and install values at a young age. Choices specifically relating to equality were ranked differently across the groups and were not consistently placed at the top, middle or bottom.

The presence of 'tougher punishment for crime' in the top three was based on a perception that criminals were treated better than victims and that this was unfair.

While the exercise asked participants to make discreet choices and to prioritise, many found it hard to do this. The issues were seen as being not only highly interlinked but also interdependent. This was particularly noticeable with 'a thriving economy' which was regarded as important because it held the potential to address other social issues, such as unemployment and crime.

'Higher tax for higher earners' was placed in the bottom three because it was felt to be unfair to tax those who had worked hard to succeed or build up a business. Higher tax was also seen as curbing earning ambition. A 'higher minimum wage' and

'lower gas and electricity prices' were in the bottom three as money was considered to be less important than health and education. People's choices were also influenced by how much these issues impacted on their own lives, the lives of others or wider society and whether they perceived them to be achievable:

I: And what about better public transport? Why was that in your bottom three?

M: Well, it's not going to improve, is it? (Male, 26-45, England)

#### 4.5 Summary

- Participants found it difficult to decide whether they felt Britain was fair or unfair. Three main stances emerged. The first was that Britain was **fair**, the second was that Britain was **fair in certain areas but not in others** and the third was that Britain was **not fair**.
- Britain was considered fair when comparing it to other countries or to what Britain was like in the past. There was also the view that Britain was too fair. Education, health care and employment were areas that people considered to be fair although people also gave examples of unfairness in relation to these areas. Other areas described as being unfair in Britain were immigration, the benefit system, financial systems and housing. This was, in part, because of a sense that things had become too fair.
- Participants found it easier to decide on whether Britain is equal than whether it is fair. Although participants did acknowledge that there was greater equality in Britain than in other countries and that legislation was improving the situation, there was a general consensus that overall Britain was not equal.
- Two main views emerged in relation to equality in Britain. The first related to how people were **treated** based on certain characteristics. The second related to **access** and **opportunities**. It was felt that Britain was not equal as certain groups or individuals had access or opportunities that others do not.
- Local or community-based good relations resonated strongly with participants. The size of the community, the composition of the community and societal changes all impacted on people's views of good relations at a local level.
- All of the equality strands were discussed across the groups, but some of them resonated more than others in people's personal lives and in relation to individual experiences and characteristics.

- There were a range of factors that influenced people's attitudes towards fairness, equality and good relations. These were:
  - the media
  - personal experiences and circumstances
  - upbringing, family life, parents and peers
  - how achievable they felt they were
  - the group dynamic.
- While fairness and equality were not seen as fully attainable, they were regarded as being important. However, there were more nuanced views of the distinctive role of each concept and suggestions that they were not always desirable. There were also discussions about fairness and equality being taken **too** far in the form of **positive discrimination**.
- The idea that things may have become too fair was related to an underlying perception of deserving and undeserving groups – the latter could include non-Christians, particularly Muslims, and 'foreigners'.
- Equality of opportunity was generally seen as more attractive and realistic than equality of outcome.

## 5. Equality, fairness and good relations in practice

The previous chapters have explored the concepts of fairness, equality and good relations and indicated that people's understandings of these terms are complex and often contradictory. It has also been highlighted that people find it easiest to explore these concepts when they are contextualised. This chapter reviews how people respond to situations where fairness, equality and good relations could play a role. While specific examples were given by participants throughout the research, case studies or 'vignettes' were also used to tease out responses to specific situations including some that the Commission provides guidance on.

This chapter draws on both spontaneous participant discussions and responses to the case studies.

### 5.1 Examples of unfairness and inequality

Areas of public life that people described as being fair or unfair and equal or unequal in Britain were highlighted earlier. Within these broad contexts, participants focused on specific examples to explain their views and try and contextualise their understanding of these concepts. This section will look at some of the specific examples that were raised spontaneously by participants.

The examples that were given by participants were clearly influenced by stories that had been widely reported in the media during the time of the research and this had a clear impact on participants' views on the subject (see figure 1.1). Not surprisingly, a recurrent example of unfairness and inequality was the wages of bankers and financiers in the current economic crisis. It was considered that financiers earned unfair amounts for the work that they did in comparison to other professions:

M: How's it equal for bankers/financiers...They say they work hard... but they're earning... a million pounds a year, and another half million pound bonus coz they work hard. They didnae work any harder as a brickie in the winter or a plumber... is just nonsense. We all work hard. (Male, 26-45, Scotland)

Others felt that it was unfair for bankers to receive such large bonuses during an economic crisis, which participants perceived to be a result of their own mistakes. There were discussions of there being 'one rule for one and one for another'.

Another example used by participants to illustrate their understanding of unfairness was the media story in February about a nurse who was suspended following a complaint that she had offered to say a prayer for a patient during a home visit. Participants thought it was unfair that the nurse had been suspended as they felt she

was only trying to offer support which could have been refused. However, they suggested that while people are entitled to their own beliefs they do not have the right to impose them on others. Discussion of this example prompted discussion of another example where a British Airways employer had been asked to remove their crucifix while at work. Participants felt this was unfair as it was part of their religion and they were not displaying it publicly. The debate over displaying religious symbols was a theme that was echoed in a discussion of a case study that was presented to participants and will be discussed further below.

As already discussed in Chapter 4, people raised positive discrimination as an area that they felt was both fair and unfair and equal and unequal. In order to explain why they held either view they used specific examples of positive discrimination in employment. Participants described personal experiences of applying for the police force and having to provide information about their sexuality and race, while others spoke about being told not to apply because they were only recruiting women and Asian officers. Those who believed these examples were unfair did so because they felt these characteristics were not relevant to their skills and experience and suggested that employers were not appointing the most suitable candidates.

Feelings of unfairness were also underpinned by a sense that employers were forced to employ certain people in order to fill quotas, which was considered to create resentment and potentially racism. Others said that it was a shame that the government had to legislate for equal employment opportunities and employers should be able to choose themselves, but they did not see this as possible as society is inherently unfair. In contrast, others felt strongly that services such as the police, fire service and NHS should reflect the communities they work in and agreed with positive discrimination if it allowed public bodies to achieve a representative workforce. There was a sense among some participants that the outcome of positive discrimination was fair, but the method of achieving it was not.

## **5.2 Case study examples**

In addition to the examples that were raised spontaneously during the group discussions, participants were asked for their views on case study examples which explored issues of fairness and equality in specific situations. Although not each case study was discussed with every group they were all discussed across the different groups. Participants were asked what they thought about the case study in general rather than whether they thought it was fair or unfair or equal or unequal, in order to explore their own responses and the language they used. In each instance the original case study was presented to participants and after an initial discussion some of the variables of the case study were changed in order to explore how attitudes shifted in relation to the context. The case studies sparked lively debate among



participants. Interestingly, some groups raised the specific examples posed by the case studies before these were presented to the group. In these instances alternative case studies were used.

### **Case study 1**

**A gay couple apply to rent a property but the landlord tells them that it has already been let. They later learn that the property had not really been let when they asked and was actually let two weeks later to a straight couple. What do you think about this?**

Discussion of this case study sparked less debate than some of the others. Participants' accounts revealed a strong sense of unfairness, as initial responses included 'it's disgraceful', 'it's not fair', 'it's terrible', 'it's discrimination' and 'what about equal opportunities?' Participants believed the couple's sexual orientation should make no difference. This view was unchanged when the facilitator asked what they thought about the example if the gay couple were swapped for a heterosexual, Afro-Caribbean couple. The only situation where participants who held this view felt it was right for the landlord to refuse to let their property would be if they were using it for illegal means, such as prostitution or to sell drugs. Participants' responses mirrored the views on fairness discussed in Chapter 3 as they felt it was unfair to treat people differently on the basis of certain characteristics.

However, there were participants who thought that the landlord had the right to their own beliefs and to choose who they let their property to. Discriminatory and prejudicial views were expressed, notably by male participants in the Scottish groups, which contradicted people's earlier views of fairness and equality. On the one hand people felt everyone should be treated the same no matter who they are, while on the other hand they felt it was fair for the landlord to refuse to rent their property based on the couples sexuality. This contradiction was picked up during the group discussions and challenged by other group members:

M1: I'm saying I wouldn't want them in my property.

M2: Well, just a few minutes ago, you were saying how it is that everybody was equal in Britain, so I mean what about this poor gay couple?

M1: ...some things are more equal than others. (Exchange between two males, 65+, Scotland)

## Case study 2

**A Muslim woman working as a hairdresser is asked not to wear a veil as her manager thinks that covering hair is bad for business. The hairdresser wants to wear her headscarf as it is an important part of her religion. What do you think about this?**

This example prompted lively and often extended discussion and divided participants. On the one hand the manager was seen as being in the right. This view was underpinned by the perspective highlighted above, that employees should not be allowed to display religious symbols in the workplace. It was also suggested that the hairdresser should not expect to wear her veil because she is living in Britain and should abide by British 'rules' like British citizens do when they are in other countries. The type of business was also a factor in shaping people's opinions as it was perceived to be particularly important for a hairdresser's hair to be visible since it was, in effect, the product they were selling.

In comparison, it was argued that the employee should not be discriminated against and participants saw it as unfair for her to be asked to remove her veil if it was not impacting on her job or offending other people. It was suggested that it might be appropriate for the hairdresser to target her business at other Muslim women and the idea of a separate area of the shop specifically for this purpose was mooted.

Participant's views did not change when the facilitator suggested replacing the female hairdresser with a male hairdresser wearing a turban. Those who felt the manager was right and it was important for a hairdresser's hair to be visible still did so, although there was some acknowledgement that this may be less important for men than for women. Similarly, those who felt the manager was unfair stated that the male hairdresser should have the same rights as the female and be able to wear his turban if it was not impacting on his ability to do his job.

## Case study 3

**A disabled employee requires time off for doctor's appointments, hospital appointments, aids and adaptation appointments. Her employer says she is taking too much time off and says she must book them as holidays. What do you think about this?**

There was a lot of discussion around this case study because participants found it difficult to reach an agreement on whether they viewed this as fair or unfair. However, two main views emerged. The first was that this example was considered unfair as the employee should have the right to take time off for legitimate reasons such as hospital appointments. The type of disability was a factor that was also

raised by participants. It was felt people did not take mental health issues seriously as they were not visible to others, therefore people were less likely to view this as a valid reason for requiring time off, which participants viewed as unfair.

The second view was that it was fair for the employer to ask the employee to take the time off as holiday, as allowing them additional leave would be unfair to other employees who had to cover their workload and did not have the same leave entitlement. This belief was dependent upon two main factors; the stage at which the person had become disabled and the size of the company. The employer was considered unfair if they had hired the person knowing they would need that time off. Alternatively the employer's stance was perceived as fair if the employee had become disabled since being appointed as the time off was seen as being potentially detrimental to the business. It was also felt that this could be open to abuse by employees.

It was also suggested that smaller business may not be able to cover large amounts of time off and the employer was therefore within their rights to ask them to take the time off as holiday.

Interestingly, people expressed their views on this case using the terms fair or unfair rather than equal or unequal. This may be due to the fact that people are more likely to use the term unfair in their everyday lives and, as discussed in Chapter 3, they found it harder to articulate their views on equality.

#### **Case study 4**

**A premier league footballer earns around £3million a year while a shop assistant earns around £18,000 a year. What do you think about this?**

Participants' views appeared to be based on the worthiness of the job and what people were contributing towards society. Two main perspectives emerged from the group discussions. On the one hand there were those who felt it was acceptable for footballers to earn £3million, as they were providing pleasure and entertainment for people and their product was making money, so they deserved something in return. This view was strongly underpinned by the fact that only a small elite earned that much and it was acceptable as it was not public money funding their wages. It was also felt that footballers earning this amount could have a positive impact on society because it gave people something to strive for.

In contrast, there were strong feelings that earning that much was unacceptable with responses including 'it's horrendous', 'it's sickening' and 'disgusting'. People who held this view acknowledged that responsibility and talent should be recognised, but

felt £3million was too much for anyone to earn. Feelings of unfairness were also underpinned by the fact that footballers were not considered worthy of that much money as they were not contributing towards society in the way that a nurse, for example, does.

Discussions around this case study developed when the facilitator suggested substituting the footballer with a chief executive of a large bank. Not surprisingly people's views were clearly influenced by the current economic downturn, as there was more acceptance of a footballer earning large amounts than a financier. While people did recognise that a chief executive would have worked hard to reach that position and held a lot of responsibility, they still felt this was an excessive amount to earn.

Although this is an example of economic inequality, participants did not use that term to describe it, and instead referred to it as fair or unfair, with people using stronger language such as 'obscene' or 'disgusting' to illustrate their feelings of unfairness. This again highlights the fact that participants felt more comfortable using language associated with fairness rather than equality.

### **Case study 5**

**The London Metropolitan Police decides that the number of black Police Officers it employs is too small and does not represent the number of people living in London. It therefore places a job advert that encourages black people to apply. What do you think about this?**

As already described above, people spontaneously mentioned positive discrimination and indeed in two groups this exact scenario was discussed before the case studies were even presented to participants. Two contrasting perspectives were evident in relation to positive discrimination. The first was that positive discrimination was necessary to balance things out and rectify discrimination from the past. However, the second perspective disagreed with positive discrimination. On an individual level people described how they did not like to feel like part of a quota and they did not perceive positive discrimination to be equal as it was felt everyone should have equal access to employment irrespective of certain characteristics, such as race, age or gender.

People's responses to this case example clearly reflect the two views of fairness highlighted in Chapter 3. The first related to treating everyone the same no matter who they are, while the second related to treating people differently according to their individual needs or merit, in order to provide people with the opportunities to achieve the same outcomes.

### 5.3 Relative acceptability of inequalities or unfairness

A question which arises from the analysis of responses to these case studies in the context of participants' responses more generally, is the extent to which some inequalities were seen as more or less acceptable than others. Arguably, economic inequality was seen as more acceptable than other inequalities for the reasons discussed above. With the example of the footballer being paid more than the shop assistant, there was one set of responses that spoke about the value of the footballer to society and the skill that they had justifying their large payout. But even among those who said that they felt the difference was too large, there was an implicit acceptance of some economic inequality. This relates back to the point that there was no appetite for equality of outcome because this would be 'boring' or akin to 'communism'. However, views were contingent on the specific context here because economic inequality was seen as unacceptable in the context of a gender pay gap.

This can be seen as related to the argument that it is fair that those people who put less into the system (financially) should receive less in return. Similarly, it was suggested that inequality is acceptable if people are given the same opportunities or the means to access the same opportunities, but don't take them.

Aside from these points there were no inequalities that stood out as being more or less acceptable – how people spoke about inequalities or prioritised them, unsurprisingly, related to their personal circumstances. For example, if someone had work challenges then employment inequality was more important to them, whereas if they knew someone who was unwell then it was health inequalities and so on.

### 5.4 Summary

- A number of the case study examples were raised spontaneously by participants prior to them being given the case studies to discuss. This was particularly notable with case study five and the positive discrimination within the Metropolitan Police force. Others, such as the example of the nurse offering to say a prayer for a patient sparked views that were clearly echoed in the discussion of case study two.
- Groups were often divided in their opinion of these case study examples with the exception of case study one where there was a higher level of consensus that this example was unfair. In this context participants raised discrimination as an issue because they felt the couple were treated differently on the basis of personal characteristics.
- During the discussions of the case studies people used language of fairness and unfairness rather than equality and good relations, despite the fact some of the

case studies were related to inequality, for example case study four related to economic inequality. This may be due to the fact that, as discussed in Chapter 3, participants found it harder to articulate their views on equality and were more likely to refer to situations as unfair in their everyday lives.

## 6. Implications

This research highlights the diversity and complexity of public attitudes towards equality, fairness and good relations. These are not concepts that provoke clear and shared understandings. Views of their meaning and value are shaped by a range of personal characteristics, experiences and external factors. Underpinning this diversity, however, is a set of findings that the Commission can use to advance its conceptual thinking.

This chapter looks at the implications of these findings for the Commission in measuring, tracking and potentially shaping public attitudes.

### 6.1 Measuring and tracking attitudes: the creation of a robust survey tool

Appendix 1 contains a set of draft survey questions that have been written drawing on the research outlined in this report. The process began with the literature review and survey case studies. This was used to identify: questions that might be directly useful, questions that could be useful if adapted, useful topics or themes to explore from existing research, and aspects missing from existing research.

The focus groups suggested that people discussed fairness and equality in two fairly broad ways in terms of: treating people the same and treating people differently, according to their needs. They also emphasised the need for people to have specific contexts in which to frame their views. These insights proved extremely valuable at the questionnaire design stage as it provided a starting point for drafting some very general statements about the principles of treating people equally or employing specific measures to change outcomes or reduce differences. Similarly, we were alert to the need for specific examples to be given. As a result the draft questions about fairness and equality include a mixture of some general statements, some of which draw on existing questions about income equality, and some questions about specific contexts. The questions about good relations were more straightforward but the focus group participants' discussions of community spirit helped the choice of wording in some of the questions.

For a survey to be robust it needs to ensure a number of things. First, its sample must be representative of the population about which it is being used to draw inferences. The use of probability sampling is commonly used to address this. Second, the questions need to be thoroughly tested so there is some confidence that they measure what they claim to and that people understand them in the way they were intended. The draft questions presented here will require extensive piloting with the public and cognitive testing is strongly advised in addition to a pilot involving a rehearsal of the questionnaire. Cognitive testing is a process very commonly applied

in questionnaire piloting to establish what people understand by the terms used in the questions. Drawing on cognitive psychology it uses various techniques to uncover what people are thinking about as they answer a question. This can reveal problems with a question that would not be apparent in a straightforward pilot. A lot of the language used to discuss issues of equality can be quite jargon laden, so there is a real danger that – without thorough piloting – the questions will mean little to the public and therefore their answers will not be very meaningful. It is also important to ensure that the questions are framed in terms that have direct application or meaning in everyday life, for example, any scenario posed should be one with which most people should at least be familiar. Doing this will help to ensure that respondents are engaged with the topic and are giving considered answers.

A survey is the only instrument capable of tracking attitudinal change over time. Qualitative research does not necessarily attempt to generalise to the population and, therefore, any change in the insights it gathers over time cannot be guaranteed to be simply a result of the elapse of time between fieldwork, as opposed to a change in the composition of the sample or the way in which the questions were posed. For a survey to provide robust estimates of change over time it is essential for it to: ask the same questions, in the same order and format; use a comparable sample design (for example, drawn from the same source with few changes to its technical specification); use a large enough sample to be able to detect changes over time to an agreed level of precision. Establishing time series data can be particularly challenging as changes in question design or survey methodology will invalidate the time series. This means that the questions to be tracked over time need to be stable and subject to only minimal essential changes after the early years.

The questions used in any future survey research will need to ensure that they refer to contexts and examples that will not age rapidly (long term time series will often require some changes eventually as predicting many years into the future is rarely feasible). The main implication for any future survey research is that if some questions do not turn out to have worked well or to have captured what was intended, the scope for major changes should ideally be limited to the second time the study is run, with very few subsequent changes. On a more positive note, it is possible to use the analysis of the first year's results to select the measures that are of most interest to be tracked over time. Analysis often reveals which questions are more and less critical to a study and it is usually possible to identify a core set of measures that require detailed monitoring, as well as some that can be revisited at longer intervals, or abandoned altogether.

A key issue for the Commission is how frequently it wishes to collect information. Very often change happens gradually over the course of many years and major year



on year changes are less common. This means that annual data collection need not be necessary. Exceptions to this are factors influenced by major events or wider political trends. For example, attitudes towards the NHS often move in tandem with the popularity of the government of the day. However, large gaps in data collection (of multiple years) can make it harder to interpret trends, as a change between just two points might simply be a result of a particularly skewed estimate in one of the years due to random variations in the sample composition. With more measures in between it is possible to see whether trends move in a particular direction and to distinguish more easily between blips and genuine change.

It is possible that the optimal intervals for data collection will be different for questions about equality, fairness and good relations. For example, if the political salience given to these concepts changes markedly as the result of a change in government, it is likely that public attitudes will reflect this. A case in point is the rapid change in attitudes to unemployment benefit recipients post 1997. Public attitudes became much more hardline as employment grew and welfare reform rose up the political agenda. If the prevailing political culture deprioritises these issues or changes the terms of the debate, quite rapid changes in opinion could result. It is also likely that the wider context will differ for each of equality, fairness and good relations. How easy that will be to predict in advance is very tricky to judge.

Finally, the extent to which the data collected can be used to inform initiatives designed to bring about change in public attitudes is likely to be affected by a number of factors. Firstly, attitudes that are very heavily associated with people's core underlying values will be less likely to shift over time to any great degree without a corresponding change in people's values. Therefore the important thing is to establish for which questions this applies. Any resulting attempts to move public opinion would then need to be underpinned by this understanding of how core values shape attitudes, so that the right approaches are used for the audiences concerned. Secondly, the extent to which attitudes to these issues are stable over time or are subject to the prevailing political or wider social climate will have an impact. The more subject they are to wider events, the less scope the Commission will have to influence them. Establishing which questions this applies to can only happen once some data collection is underway.

## **6.2 Implications for shaping attitudes**

It is clear from this research that there are not shared understandings of equality, fairness or good relations and that for shared definitions of the concepts to be achieved a clear context must be provided. Discussions in the stakeholder workshops suggested that any attempt to influence attitudes must start with the establishment of a shared understanding of these terms. This shared understanding

will need to include a lucid and well communicated set of definitions from the Commission.

Any attempt to shape public attitudes will also need to take account of the two clear approaches to fairness and equality emerging from the research. On the one hand is a discussion about the need to treat everyone the same no matter who they are. On the other is a view that people should be treated differentially according to need in order to give people the opportunity to achieve the same outcomes. Although there are those who believe that there should be a level playing field and a chance for everyone to achieve the same, there is also a strong view that actually achieving equality of outcomes is not desirable. So while the opportunity for everyone to achieve the same should be there, this is neither expected nor desired to happen in reality. This distinction is notable because inequality of outcome was the only type of inequality that people openly said was acceptable.

Public understandings of good relations will clearly also need to be taken into account. Although the Commission does not yet have a full definition of good relations, its working definitions refer to concepts such as multiculturalism and integration. From this research it is clear that public attitudes are approaching this concept from a slightly different angle. There is a clear narrative within public attitudes about good relations being about people getting on with each other at a community level, but while this refers to strengthening intergenerational relationships, it does not refer to welcoming diversity or multiculturalism in the same way as the Commission does. To look at this another way, while public attitudes are focused on 'bonding social capital' and improving relations between people with similar backgrounds the Commission's view includes an element of 'bridging social capital' and the formation of relationships between different social groups. There is a nostalgia within public attitudes about returning to the good old days when neighbours relied on each other more and front doors could be left open. The Commission's vision is one that looks to the future and takes account of modern social diversity. This disjuncture in attitudes has implications for the establishment of good relations. First, there clearly needs to be a stronger shared understanding of what this means. Second, any attempt to encourage good relations as defined by the Commission must take account of public priorities and ensure that these are addressed too.

Language is also an important consideration. Fairness is a term that people are comfortable with and likely to use in their everyday lives. The same is not true of equality and good relations. People will talk in terms of things being equal or unequal but are more likely to use the language of fairness. This is in part because, as mentioned above, fairness is associated with personal outcomes and equality is

associated with policy and legislation. Good relations is a term that people can relate to but are very unlikely to use themselves, instead people are likely to talk in terms of **getting on with one another** and **community and neighbourliness**. Similarly, while people understand the concept of positive action or positive discrimination, they may not know the term for it. All this means that any advance in the Commission's conceptual thinking needs to take account of language. While it may be appropriate for the Commission to use different language to the public (and even accepted that this is necessary in a policy or legislative context), thought may need to be given to how each of these terms resonate and are being used in wider society.

The stakeholder events also generated ideas about how messages around fairness, equality and good relations might be conveyed. In Wales there was a focus on the need for greater education for school-aged children about equalities and how they operate in public life. Welsh stakeholders felt that educating children was a good way to reach out to the population since children, in turn, educate their parents. The media was also suggested as a way of shaping attitudes in this area. Focus group participants readily acknowledged the effect the media had on their views and stakeholders recognised it as a powerful tool.

Another implication for shaping attitudes is a view emerging from the qualitative research that fairness and equality simply are not attainable. It was also notable that those people who felt that fairness and equality were unobtainable also didn't think they were important for society. It was hard to unpick whether an unfavourable attitude to fairness and equality made them appear unachievable or whether seeing them as unachievable led people to feel less positively towards them. The relationship between the two is unlikely to be linear. However, this finding does have implications for shaping attitudes, since people are less likely to subscribe to the idea of fairness and equality if they think it cannot actually be a reality.

Overall, the findings from this research suggest that any attempt to shape public attitudes will need to focus on very specific aspects of fairness, equality and good relations. As a whole the concepts are viewed as overwhelming and even unobtainable. When broken down and applied to specific situations and with a meaning for each attached, these concepts attract broad public support and are recognised as being important components of modern society. However, the varied levels of understanding and the extent to which these concepts were also contested has implications for the Commission and what its future role should be. On the one hand, an educative or campaigning role is suggested which seeks to change perceptions and transform attitudes. On the other, a regulatory or enforcing role is suggested which is concerned with securing institutional equality via the law. The two are, of course, not mutually exclusive and the potential impact of the Equality Bill on

business and public services suggests a role for a Commission that aims to shift perceptions, in order to assist with the efficacy of its regulatory role.

Language and meaning are critical here. The research does suggest that in order for this to be done effectively, there is a need to distinguish between the concepts of equality and fairness because people understand them differently. Equality is particularly associated with legislation, whereas fairness is understood on a more personal level. Good relations on the other hand attracts less shared understanding and although it is clearly perceived as closely related to fairness and equality, people fail to see the connection in the way that the Commission would perhaps like. The Commission's objectives may be better served by adopting a narrative that talks about the creation of a fair and equal society where people get on with each other.

## Appendix 1      Draft survey questions

### General notes/background to the draft questions:

The questions are divided into four broad sections:

- General attitudes to fairness and/or equality
- Attitudes to fairness and/or equality in specific settings
- Attitudes to good relations
- Drivers of attitudes to fairness, equality and good relations

Each question lists the source underneath, as either NEW or taken from/based on one of the following surveys:

- BSA (British Social Attitudes survey)
- SSA (Scottish Social Attitudes survey)
- NILT (Northern Ireland Life and Times survey)
- ESS (European Social Survey)
- ISSP (International Social Survey Programme – which in Britain is run on BSA)
- The Citizenship Survey

There is also an 'item count' after each question. This indicates the amount of space these questions would take up in a questionnaire – for example, questions which ask people how strongly they agree or disagree with each of five statements would be counted as five items, while one that asks people to choose which one of five categories best describes their view only counts as one item. Questions where people can pick up to three answers tend to count as two or three items. As an indication of what this means in practice, a 'standard' module on BSA (excluding all background and demographic questions) consists of 40 items. This comprises around 10 minutes of questions asked by the interviewer and an additional 10 questions included on a pen and paper self-completion questionnaire completed by the respondent at the end of the interview.

Notes on questions, in *italics*, provide contextual information and highlight key issues for further consideration at any future piloting stage.

The questions included here are ordered thematically rather than being presented in the best order for a questionnaire. We would suggest the general questions come before the questions about specific scenarios. Final decisions about the overall balance of the questionnaire content, including which questions should be administered face to face and which in self-completion format, would need to be taken once the piloting and developing recommended here has been conducted.

## Section 1 – General attitudes to fairness and/or equality

### Introduction/summary

Key themes the questions included here are intended to explore include:

- **Support for principles of fairness and/or equality in general.** In particular, these questions focus on support for using public policy and/or taxes to achieve fairness and/or equality. People may think fairness/equality is a good thing, but be opposed to using public policy to achieve this (either because they think it will be ineffective or because they do not believe the government should intervene in this area). Given the Commission's remit, we felt it was important the questions capture support specifically for government action to achieve fairness and equality.
- **The importance (including relative importance) attached to achieving fairness and/or equality** – since people might think fairness and/or equality are important, but less important than other things they want the government to pursue.
- **Support for process vs. outcome equality in general** – roughly defined as support for treating everyone exactly the same, and support for treating some people differently in order to achieve a more equal outcome. This section is key in terms of understanding what different people may understand by fairness/equality. Views to process vs. outcome equality in specific contexts are explored in Section 2.
- **Perceptions of whether society is fair.**
- **General attitudes to social mobility/life opportunities.** Asking about this aspect of equality provides an additional perspective beyond the process/outcome focused questions.

### Key issues for the Commission to consider in relation to the questions in this section

#### Definitions and terms

- The focus groups were unable to come up with a consistent definition of 'fairness' and 'equality' and of the difference, if they saw one, between these two terms. In general, the term 'fairness' seemed to be preferred and easier to understand than the term 'equality'. These questions have, therefore, tended to use this term. However, cognitive testing will need to consider how terms like 'fair' are understood in the context of these questions. Moreover, the Commission may wish to consider whether, in its view, there are important differences in the meaning of the two terms that need to be recognised in the survey questions.
- For questions trying to explore attitudes to outcome equality, we talk about 'differences in how different groups get on in life'. In developing the questions,

further work will be required to establish how people interpret this phrase (are they, for example, thinking about economic or other sorts of difference?).

- Making sure 'everyone has the same opportunity to get on in life' is also included as a category in several questions. Again, further work will be required to unpick whether the concept of equal opportunities is sufficiently clear, and whether people can distinguish this from other categories, like treating everyone the same.

### **What 'types' or understandings of equality should the questions cover?**

- Differences in support for equality of process and equality of outcome seem, from both the focus group research and the background literature, to be of key importance in explaining why some people may profess support for equality/fairness but dislike some measures designed to achieve it. This is reflected in the draft questions here and in Section 2. However, the Commission should consider whether there are other key debates/issues around what it means to treat someone fairly/equally which the survey needs to tap into.

### **What geographic level do we want to explore fairness within?**

- We need to decide what the appropriate point of reference is for questions asking about perceptions of inequality in society – is it Britain, or England/Wales/Scotland? Or the local area? For the moment, references are just to 'COUNTRY'.

### **Support for principles of fairness/equality in general**

1. In Britain there are laws to ensure different groups in society are treated equally in employment, education and in access to goods, facilities and services.

How much do you agree or disagree that laws like this...

- a) protect some groups at the expense of others?
- b) are needed to ensure that people are treated fairly?
- c) cost businesses too much?
- d) help create a more equal society?

ITEMS: 4

SOURCE: New

2. At present, there are big differences between how some groups of people in (COUNTRY) get on in life. How much would you agree or disagree that...

- a) The government should do all it can to prevent big differences between how some groups of people get on in life.

- b) Big differences in how different groups of people get on in life are inevitable, whether we like them or not.
- c) It is unfair that there are big differences in how some groups of people in (COUNTRY) get on in life.
- d) Big differences in how some groups of people get on in life are a major cause of problems like crime in (COUNTRY).
- e) It would be unfair on everyone else if the government tried to prevent some people doing less well than others in life.
- f) It doesn't matter if there are big differences between how different groups of people get on in life, as long as everyone is treated exactly the same.
- g) Big differences between how different groups of people get on in life do not worry me.

ITEMS: 7

SOURCE: New

NOTES: Would need to cognitively test 'some groups'/'groups of people' to see what people are thinking of here.

**(Relative) importance attached to achieving fairness/equality**

3. Here is a list of things the government could try and achieve. Which do you think should be its highest priority, that is the most important thing it should try and do? Please read through the whole list before deciding.

- A. Improve standards of education
- B. Ensure that the rights of all groups in society are respected and protected
- C. Improve housing
- D. Help the economy to grow faster
- E. Reduce differences in how different groups of people get on in life
- F. Improve people's health
- G. Cut crime
- H. Ensure that everyone in this country have the same opportunities to get on in life
- I. Improve the environment
- J. Improve public transport
- K. Ensure that everyone is treated exactly the same, regardless of their background
- L. Other (Please say what)

And which next?

And which next?



ITEMS: 3

SOURCE: New

NOTES:

- The response categories above which relate to ‘equality’ are meant to present different possible meanings of ‘equal’ or ‘fair’ treatment – that is equality of opportunity, protecting everyone’s rights, treating people the same, reducing differences to achieve equality of outcome. These are not completely distinct though – for example, could think best way of reducing differences is simply to treat everyone exactly the same. Does this matter? Are they sufficiently clear/well-defined? Any other meanings?
  - This question builds on an existing SSA question from the Scottish Government core module, if it was asked in that study an agreement would need to be reached with the Scottish Government to change the format for that year. This would not be a problem if asked in the BSA or any other survey.
4. There are different opinions about what values are important for living in (COUNTRY). On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is not important at all and 7 is very important, how important would you say it is ...
- A. That all citizens have an adequate standard of living
  - B. That the rights of all groups in society are respected and protected
  - C. That everyone is treated exactly the same, regardless of their background
  - D. That everyone has the same opportunity to get on in life
  - E. That the government tries to reduce differences in how different groups of people get on in life
  - F. That everyone has respect for the law
  - G. That people are free to criticize the views and beliefs of others
  - H. That people are proud of (COUNTRY)
  - I. That everyone speaks English

ITEMS: 9

SOURCE: New, drawing on BSA and Citizenship Survey

NOTES: This list combines aspects of equality, fairness and good relations. Suggest that cognitive testing is used to explore people’s understanding of different ‘values’ in the piloting stage.

5. Here are some different things people have said a country might try and achieve. Which, if any, do you think Britain should try and achieve?
- A. Try to make sure everyone is treated exactly the same, regardless of their background

- B. Try to make sure everyone has the same opportunity to get on in life
- C. Try to reduce differences in how different groups of people get on in life
- D. Try to ensure that the rights of all groups in society are respected and protected
- E. It should not do any of these

ITEMS: 1

SOURCE: NEW

NOTES: Various different formats of asking about these issues are worth trying, hence the apparent repetition between questions. Also, if the survey uses two formats (face to face and self-completion, like BSA and SSA) it might be possible to ask these in different places.

### **Process versus outcome equality (general)**

6. Which of the statements on this card comes closest to your own view?

Everyone in society should be treated exactly the same, even if this means there are still big differences between how some groups get on in life.

OR

Some people in society should be given extra help to get on in life, to reduce the differences between groups of people.

ITEMS: 1

SOURCE: New question

### **Perceptions of whether society is fair**

7. How much would you agree or disagree that (COUNTRY) is a society where everyone is treated fairly?

ITEMS: 1

SOURCE: New (based on a NILT question)

8. In your view, are any of the groups on this card generally treated better when compared to other groups in (COUNTRY)?

And are any generally treated worse?

White people

Black or Asian people

Catholics  
Protestants  
Muslims  
Gay men and lesbians  
Heterosexuals/'straight' people  
Disabled people  
People who are not disabled  
Children  
Young people  
Middle aged people  
Older people  
Gypsies/travellers  
Women  
Men  
People with high incomes  
People with low incomes  
People who went to university  
People who left school at 16

ITEMS: 6 (assumes people will pick an average of 3 per question)

SOURCE: New (based on a NILT QUESTION)

NOTES: Probably need to review terminology used to describe different groups of people – needs to be easily understandable to public, which may sometimes mean using terms that would not always be the preferred term among equalities professionals. Need to cognitively test what people are thinking of when they think of people being treated 'better' or 'worse'. Alternative wordings include: 'treated more/less fairly', 'get on better/worse in life than others'.

### **Social mobility and life opportunities**

**9. Please tick one box for each of these to show how important you think it is for getting ahead in life...**

Essential  
Very important  
Fairly important  
Not very important  
Not at all important

- a. How important is coming from a wealthy family?
- b. How important is having well-educated parents?

- c. How important is having a good education yourself?
- d. How important is having ambition?
- e. How important is hard work?
- f. How important is knowing the right people?
- g. How important is having political connections?
- h. How important is giving bribes?
- i. How important is a person's ethnicity?
- j. How important is a person's religion?
- k. How important is being born a man or a woman?

ITEMS: 11

SOURCE: BSA ISSP

**10. Please tick one box for each of these to show how important you think it *should be for getting ahead in life...***

Essential

Very important

Fairly important

Not very important

Not at all important

- a. How important should coming from a wealthy family be?
- b. How important should having well-educated parents be?
- c. How important should having a good education yourself be?
- d. How important should having ambition be?
- e. How important should hard work be?
- f. How important should knowing the right people be?
- g. How important should having political connections be?
- h. How important should giving bribes be?
- i. How important should a person's ethnicity be?
- j. How important should a person's religion be?
- k. How important should being born a man or a woman be?

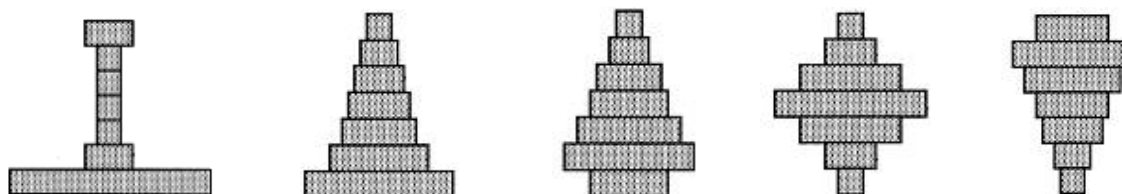
ITEMS: 11

SOURCE: New

NOTES: It would be possible with these two sets of questions to establish the size of the gap between what people perceive actually happens and what they think should happen. The gap could be monitored over time to see if it reduces or increases, and it would be possible to assess whether any change occurs because of changes to

what people think happens or changes to their aspirations. Appreciate that this is a long list – it could be trimmed back.

11. These five diagrams show different types of society. Please read the descriptions and look at the diagrams below.



Type A	Type B	Type C	Type D	Type E
A small elite at the top, very few people in the middle and the great mass of people at the bottom.	A society like a pyramid with a small elite at the top, more people in the middle, and most at the bottom.	A pyramid except that just a few people are at the bottom.	A society with most people in the middle.	Many people near the top, and only a few near the bottom.

- First, what type of society is Britain today – which diagram comes closest?
- What do you think Britain ought to be like – which would you prefer?
- Which diagram comes closest what you think a fair society would look like?
- Which diagram comes closest to what you think an unfair society would look like?

SOURCE: BSA ISSP (last two items new)

ITEMS: 4

NOTES: Although this implies an economic distribution which is narrower than the Commission’s broader interests, the new questions about what fairness would look like could provide a helpful insight into different conceptions of it. It’s likely that people will have different ideas about this.

## Section 2 – Attitudes to fairness and equality in specific settings

### Introduction/summary

These questions on more specific settings are intended to probe further the limits of people’s support for promoting fairness/equality. For example, people may say they support action to achieve equality of outcome in general, but be less keen on specific

actions that might be taken to try and achieve this within particular contexts like employment, goods and services and so on.

Following discussion about which 'settings' the survey should cover for the more specific questions, we have drafted questions covering:

- Employment
- Health
- Education
- Goods and services

These 'settings' are based partly on the areas in which legislation exists and partly on issues raised in the focus groups. The Commission should consider whether these are the best/most appropriate domains to cover.

In particular, while we have included it for consideration at this point, we feel the education setting may be difficult to ask about in a survey context. People without children do not always have strong views about school issues, while questions about university can be influenced by differences in attitudes to the importance of higher education. In relation to the draft questions below, it is possible that people might be confused about children doing less well as they might just think about children who just aren't very bright, as opposed to not having the same opportunities. However, we feel it is worth piloting and testing these questions before final decisions are taken on their inclusion or exclusion.

In relation to goods and services, it was not easy to come up with a 'setting' that everyone might be able to relate to. The example used here is swimming pools, chosen because it was relatively easy to think of ways of framing questions touching on whether providers should be required to make adaptations so that everyone can use them, rather than just allowing everyone to use it without 'discrimination'. We were keen to avoid framing the question in terms of physical access as very few people disagree with the need for such adaptations, but did not want to make it too specific (for example, women only swimming sessions) as that could detract from the broad principle that this is trying to measure. This set of questions may need significant revision after piloting, however.

In addition to including questions on settings covering public services, private goods and services and employment, we had a long discussion about the extent to which questions focusing explicitly on income inequality should be included. We have included some possible questions on the welfare system which touch on this issue at the end of this section. The extent to which there is interest in views on income

inequality in particular is something for the Commission to consider when developing these questions further.

The idea behind focusing on settings rather than the six equalities strands was to move away from the format used in studies of discrimination, where people are asked their views about an example of unfair treatment in relation to lots of different groups. Instead we wanted to establish levels of support for the broad principle of actions that might be taken to reduce inequalities. These questions, therefore, turn that format around and ask about different settings without giving specific details of the groups in question.

The intention was to try and avoid people’s attitudes being influenced by their views about specific groups. However, as seen in the focus groups, and the discrimination studies, people’s views about these kinds of measures are intrinsically linked to what they think about different groups so this might be a difficult route to pursue. Also, respondents may find it very difficult to answer without being given specific examples. If the Commission was interested in exploring the limits of people’s support for measures like this in relation to specific groups then the number of settings could be reduced and they could be asked about various groups. Alternatively, the sample could be split randomly and the questionnaire could take respondents through different routes to establish how much support changes when specific examples are posed, for example:

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
General questions	General questions	General questions
Specific examples: *gender and religion	Specific examples: ethnicity and age	Specific examples: sexual orientation and disability

\*These are just to illustrate the principle of streaming the questionnaire, the number of different streams possible would depend on the sample size.

The intention here would **not** be to find out what people’s views are about equality measures for certain groups, simply to establish the size of the gap between support for the general principle and support using concrete examples.

**Support for principle of equality of outcome in different contexts:**

**12.** How much would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- a) It doesn't matter if some groups of people are less likely to run big companies, as long as anyone with the right skills can apply for these jobs.
- b) It doesn't matter if some groups of people are less likely to get into certain universities, as long as everyone who gets the required exam results can apply.
- c) It doesn't matter if some groups of children do less well at school, as long as all pupils get a good standard of education.
- d) It doesn't matter if some groups of people are likely to die at a younger age than others, as long as everyone is entitled to free health care when they need it.
- e) It doesn't matter if some groups of people rarely use public swimming pools, as long as everyone is allowed to use them.

ITEMS: 5 (including 2 education options)

SOURCE: New questions

NOTES: Would need to cognitively test 'some groups of people'.

### **Support for specific measures to achieve equality of outcome in different contexts**

NOTES: We have drafted two formats for these questions, which aim to tap support for different specific measures to achieve equality of outcome. Ideally both should be piloted to see which works best.

#### **Format 1**

**13. a)** Imagine a big private company that doesn't have many staff from a particular group of people. Do you think that the company should be expected to make extra efforts to recruit people from this group when it needs new staff?

- Definitely should
- Probably should
- Probably should NOT
- Definitely should NOT

b) Now think about a large public sector employer, like a council. What if that doesn't have many staff from a particular group of people. Do you think that a council should be expected to make extra efforts to recruit people from this group when it needs new staff?

c) Say a particular group of people tend to have worse health than others. Do you think that the NHS should provide extra services to try and improve the health of this group?



d) Say a particular group of people are less likely to go to university than others. Should universities give them priority for places, assuming they have the right qualifications?

e) Say a particular group of children tend to do less well at school than others. Should children from this group get extra support at school?

f) Say a particular group of people who like going swimming won't use public pools because they feel uncomfortable there. Should public pools offer special sessions for groups like this to try and encourage them to swim more often?

ITEMS: 6 (including 2 education options)

**Format 2** This format poses two options so people have a better sense of the possible different outcomes. It has the advantage of using the word 'fair' – so more directly addresses fairness in these contexts.

**14. a)** Imagine a big private company that doesn't have many staff from a particular group of people. Which do you think is the fairest way of deciding who gets interviewed for a new job at that company?

Everyone who has the right qualifications and skills has exactly the same chance of getting an interview

OR

People from the group which is under-represented have a better chance of getting an interview, as long as they have the qualifications and skills needed to do the job.

b) Now think about a large public sector employer, like a council. What if that doesn't have many staff from a particular group of people. Which do you think is the fairest way of deciding who gets interviewed for a new job there?

Everyone who has the right qualifications and skills has exactly the same chance of getting an interview

OR

People from the group which is under-represented have a better chance of getting an interview, as long as they have the qualifications and skills needed to do the job.

c) Some groups of people tend to have worse health than others. Which do you think is the fairest way for the NHS to deliver services?

There should be some special services for people who tend to have worse health  
OR  
Exactly the same services should be available to everyone

d) Some groups of people are less likely to go to university than others. Which do you think is the fairest way for universities to decide who should get a place?  
Everyone who gets the required qualifications has the same chance of getting a place

OR

People from groups who are less likely to go to university should have a better chance of getting a place, as long as they get the required qualifications

NOTE: People who choose the second option could then be asked if they think it would be fair to give people in this group a place if they have lower grades than other people (though this may be getting too detailed/nuanced).

e) Children from some groups tend to do less well at school than others. Which do you think is the fairest way of teaching children?

There should be extra help and support for children from groups who tend to do less well at school

OR

All children should be treated the same at school.

f) Say a particular group of people who like going swimming won't use public pools because they feel uncomfortable there. Which do you think is the fairest way for public pools to arrange their swimming sessions?

There should be some sessions reserved for people from particular groups who might feel uncomfortable there

OR

All sessions should be open to everyone.

ITEMS: 6 (including 2 education options)

### **Welfare system**

**15.** The government raises money through taxation to pay for benefits and services like education and health. How much do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

- a) It's only right that taxes paid by the majority help support those in need
- b) If we want to live in a healthy, well-educated society we have to be willing to pay the taxes to fund it
- c) It's not fair that some people pay a lot of money in tax and hardly use the services their taxes pay for
- d) The best reason for paying taxes now is that you never know when you might need benefits and services yourself
- e) It's not right that people benefit from services that they haven't helped to pay for

ITEMS: 5

SOURCE: BSA

NOTES: These questions were used in some analysis of attitudes to poverty to identify people with a self-interested or altruistic approach to social welfare. These capture notions of fairness well, and could also be a useful measure of core values.

### Section 3 – Good relations

#### Introduction/summary

The questions included in this section cover:

- **Overall perceptions of the importance of good relations** – including the relative importance of good relations in making somewhere a good place to live.
- **Beliefs about what makes for good relations** – exploring people's beliefs about what makes for good relations between people from different backgrounds.
- **Beliefs about good relations, mixing and multi-culturalism** – set of questions looking at personal beliefs about what relations between people from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds should be – should they mix more? Do people think there will always be conflict? Etc.
- **Beliefs about level of social contact in local area** – to tap whether people think there is mixing between different ethnic, age and income groups in their area.
- **Personal attitudes to mixing with people from different backgrounds** – their own personal preferences for mixing with people from different backgrounds, covering different contexts like personal life, employment, education.
- **Personal experience of mixing with people from different backgrounds** – covering actual experience of mixing with people from different backgrounds.

#### Overall perceptions of the importance of good relations

16. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this local area (within 15/20 minutes walking distance), is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?

Definitely agree, Tend to agree, Tend to disagree, Definitely disagree

ITEMS: 1

SOURCE: Citizenship Survey

NOTES: While this question is more about whether people believe there are good relations between people in their area, it is included here as it precedes the following question, on importance, in the Citizenship Survey.

**17.** And how important do you think it is for people from different backgrounds get on well together in this local area?

Very important, Fairly important, Not very important, Not at all important

ITEMS: 1

SOURCE: New

NOTES: The Citizenship Survey question could be reworded to ask how well people in the area get on (very well, fairly well, etc.) to match the follow-up question more closely, depending on how important it is to include the Citizenship Survey cohesion measure.

**18.** I'd like to ask what you think makes somewhere a good place to live. If you had to choose just **one** item from this list, what would it be?

And what would your **second** choice be?

- 1 Low level of crime
- 2 Access to GPs and local health services
- 3 Good quality affordable housing
- 4 Good shopping facilities
- 5 Access to good public transport
- 6 Good schools
- 7 Good jobs
- 8 Facilities for young children
- 9 Strong sense of community spirit
- 10 Clean local environment
- 11 Public spaces in good condition (e.g. pavements, parks, roads)
- 12 Family and friends close by
- 13 Access to places to go out (e.g. pubs, restaurants, galleries)
- 14 Other answer (WRITE IN)
- 15 (None of these)

ITEMS: 2

SOURCE: SSA

NOTES: The 'community spirit' item in the list could be considered a measure of good relations – or the existing wording could be changed to ask more directly about something like: 'people getting on well together, regardless of their background'. In SSA the community spirit item usually comes about 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> in people's priorities.

### **Beliefs about what makes for good relations**

**19.** Here are some things people have said are needed for an area to have a strong sense of community spirit. Which do you think is the **most** important?

And which next?

Which do you think is the **least** important?

The people who live there:

- ...have a strong sense of belonging to the area
- ...who come from different backgrounds get on well together
- ...look out for each other
- ...trust each other
- ...respect the law
- ...help out in the local community e.g. by volunteering
- ...have an adequate standard of living
- ...share the same customs, traditions and religion
- ...speak a common language
- ...have similar incomes

ITEMS: 3

SOURCE: New

NOTES: The piloting could be used to find out if people have other suggestions. Note that the items are worded in one direction, so it won't be possible to infer that if someone does not pick 'share the same customs' etc that they think having a mix of different customs is good for community spirit. An alternative would be to ask people how important each item is, but this would take up nine questions.

### **Beliefs about good relations, mixing and multi-culturalism**

**20.** Thinking about the traditions of people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds in Britain today, how strongly would you agree or disagree with the following:

- a) Having different cultural, ethnic and religious traditions in Britain makes it a better place to live.
- b) There will always be conflict between people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds in Britain.
- c) I am not interested in the traditions of people from different backgrounds to me.
- d) People from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds should mix with each other more often.

ITEMS: 4

SOURCE: New (adapted from NILT)

NOTES: The final item (d) could be omitted if the question below about mixing is included. If conflict was of interest to the Commission these questions could be extended to ask about other forms (between economic/class groups, inter-generational) or the religious and ethnic examples could be split. Tension might be a better word than conflict if extended to other groups.

**21.** Some people think that it is better for a country if almost everyone shares the same customs, religions and traditions. These people would put themselves in box 1. Other people feel it is better for a country if there is a variety of different customs, religions and traditions and would put themselves in box 7. Other people have views somewhere in between in boxes 2 to 6.

Please can you tell me which number comes closest to your own views about whether it's better for people to share the same customs, religions and traditions or whether it's better for there to be a variety?

1 - better to share the same customs

2

3

4

5

6

7 - better for there to be a variety

ITEMS: 1

SOURCE: SSA

**Beliefs about contact between people from different backgrounds in local area**

**22.** Firstly, thinking about how people from different ethnic and religious groups mix together in the local area (15-20 minutes walking distance), do you think that different ethnic and religious groups...

- (1) ...mix enough
- (2) ...should mix more
- (3) ...should mix less
- (4) NOT APPLICABLE

**23.** Now thinking about how people from different age groups mix together in the local area (15-20 minutes walking distance), do you think that different age groups...

- (1) ...mix enough
- (2) ...should mix more
- (3) ...should mix less
- (4) NOT APPLICABLE

**24.** And what about how people from different income groups mix together in the local area (15-20 minutes walking distance), do you think that different income groups...

- (1) ...mix enough
- (2) ...should mix more
- (3) ...should mix less
- (4) NOT APPLICABLE

ITEMS: 3

SOURCE: 1<sup>st</sup> item Citizenship Survey, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> new

NOTES: Rather than repeat what the Citizenship Survey asks, the module could extend the concept and ask about a broader range of groups. The third example would need to be cognitively tested to ensure that people understand what is meant by 'income groups', would be worth testing whether people understand the term 'social class' better, or ask instead about 'people with different incomes', rather than refer to groups.

### **Personal attitudes to mixing with people from different backgrounds**

**25.** Would you rather live in an area with lots of different kinds of people OR where most people are similar to you?

ITEMS: 1

SOURCE: SSA

**26.** If you were working and had to change your job, would you prefer a workplace with people from lots of different backgrounds, or where most people are similar to you?

PROBE IF NECESSARY: Say if you did have a job?

**27.** And if you were deciding where to send your children to school, would you prefer to send them to a school with children from lots of different backgrounds, or where most of the children have similar backgrounds?

PROBE IF NECESSARY: Say if you did have school age children?

ITEMS: 2

SOURCE: New (adapted from NILT)

Alternative wording – to keep the format the same as the question about local area

**28.** If you were working and had to change your job, would you prefer a workplace with lots of different kinds of people, or where most people are similar to you?

PROBE IF NECESSARY: Say if you did have a job?

**29.** And if you were deciding where to send your children to school, would you prefer to send them to a school with lots of different kinds of children, or where most of the children were similar to your child?

PROBE IF NECESSARY: Say if you did have school age children?

NOTES: It would be worth cognitively testing whether 'lots of different kind of people' is more or less clear than 'people from similar backgrounds'. Establishing what kinds of places people live and work in and where their children go to school could be a useful driver.

**30.** Which of the following best applies to you:

I generally prefer to mix with people from the same background as me

I generally prefer to mix with people from different kinds of background to me

I have no preference

I don't know anyone from a different kind of background to me



ITEMS: 1

SOURCE: New (adapted from NILT)

Alternative wording:

- I generally prefer to mix with people who are similar to me
- I generally prefer to mix with people who are different to me
- I have no preference
- I don't know anyone from a different kind of background to me

NOTES: As before, two formats of wording should be tested. These questions would work better in self-completion format and, therefore, asked in a different part of the questionnaire to the following questions about mixing.

**31.** How important is it to you to have friends from different ethnic and religious backgrounds to yourself?

- Very important
- Quite important
- Not very important
- Not at all important
- (Don't have friends)

**32.** And how important is it to you to have friends from different income groups to yourself?

**33.** And how important is it to you to have friends from different age groups to yourself?

ITEMS: 3

SOURCE: New

NOTES: These would work best in self-completion format.

### **Personal experience of mixing with people from different backgrounds**

**34.** The next question asks about whether you have mixed socially with other groups of people.

Choosing your answer from the card, in the last year, how often, if at all, have you mixed socially with people at your home or their home?

- (1) Daily
  - (2) Weekly
  - (3) Monthly
  - (4) At least once a year
  - (5) Less often
  - (6) Never
- DON'T KNOW/NO OPINION*

ASK ALL WHO HAVE MIXED DAILY TO AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR

**35.** And how often in the last year, have you mixed socially with people from different ethnic and religious groups to yourself at your home or their home?

ASK ALL WHO HAVE MIXED DAILY - AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR

**36.** And how often in the last year, have you mixed socially with people from different age groups to yourself at your home or their home? Please don't include time spent mixing socially with younger or older relatives.

ASK ALL WHO HAVE MIXED DAILY-AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR

**37.** And how often in the last year, have you mixed socially with people who have a very different income to yourself at your home or their home?

ITEMS: 4

SOURCE: New (adapted from Citizenship Survey)

NOTES: As above, these attempt to broaden the questions asked in the Citizenship Survey. In response to the Commission's interest in deep/meaningful interactions the most intimate location – home – was chosen as the example. In addition, the first general question (not included in the Citizenship Survey) will help gauge what proportion of the total time people spending mixing in this context is spent in the company of people from different backgrounds. The number of different groups asked about can be extended/cut as preferred, the key thing here is the question format. Might want to exclude mixing with family members, particularly with income groups as retired parents might be thinking about their working children and vice versa. Or, as with the other examples in this section, might be better to ask about different social classes.

**38.** Do you have any friends, or do you ever mix socially, with any of the following types of people?

Someone with a disability

Someone from a different racial or ethnic background to you

Someone who is a different religion to you

Someone who is gay or lesbian

Someone who is in a different social class to you

Someone who is much older or much younger than you

Tick all that apply

- 1 No
- 2 Yes – a member of my family
- 3 Yes – a friend I know fairly well
- 4 Yes – someone I do not know very well
- 5 Yes – someone at my work
- 6 Yes – someone else
- 7 Not sure

ITEMS: 9 (assumes an average of 1.5 answers per question)

SOURCE: New (adapted from SSA)

NOTES: The SSA questions ask if the respondent knows any of these kinds of people personally, but that can include quite casual acquaintances and people like shop keepers or work colleagues who are not close. In keeping with the questions about mixing we suggest asking about friend and social contacts. Their main use in the SSA is to identify people who don't know anyone in these groups, the specific gradations of acquaintance are less important, but it will be useful in this revised version to map out family and non-family ties (especially with the generational item).

### **Social trust**

**39.** Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

- 1 Most people can be trusted
- 2 Can't be too careful in dealing with people
- 8 Don't know
- 9 Refusal

ITEMS: 1

SOURCE: BSA/SSA longstanding item

NOTES: Social trust is an important aspect of good relations and should be included as a key background variable.

## Section 4 – Drivers of attitudes

### Introduction/summary

The questions included in this section are structured around the broad headings for different drivers of attitudes to equality, fairness and good relations identified by the evidence review, namely:

- **Values and underlying psychological/personality traits** – including questions designed to tap broad political values and more psychological traits like how ‘self’ or ‘other’ oriented people are.
- **Socio-demographic factors** – like education, income, age/generation etc. This could also include community-level factors, like the social mix/deprivation of the area people live in.
- **Legitimising beliefs** – including, for example, beliefs about the reasons for inequality, the costs of actions to address inequalities, etc. These are beliefs which may explain why some people appear to support the principle of equality but oppose specific measures to achieve it. This aspect has been integrated into many of the questions in the previous sections, but one additional measure is suggested below.
- **Knowledge** – in order to measure the extent to which attitudes to action to address inequality are underpinned by realistic beliefs about the nature of the social world and/or the extent of inequality at present.

### Values and underlying psychological/personality traits

**40.** Some people think it is important to put yourself first whilst other people think it is more important to think about others. Which of the statements on this card comes closest to your view?

(It is important to...)

1. ...put yourself first and leave others to do the same
2. ...put yourself first but also consider other people’s needs and interests
3. ...consider everyone’s needs and interests equally, including your own
4. OR, it is important to put other people’s needs and interests above your own

ITEMS: 1

SOURCE: BSA

The following Human Values Scale is gender-specific with the wording tailored to male and female respondents. The questions are identical, only the gender of the person described changes. The version for women is shown below. It was developed for use in self-completion format.

The answer scale is as follows:

Very much like me

Like me

Somewhat like me

A little like me

Not like me

- C** She believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life.
- D** It's important to her to show her abilities. She wants people to admire what she does.
- E** It is important to her to live in secure surroundings. She avoids anything that might endanger her safety.
- F** She likes surprises and is always looking for new things to do. She thinks it is important to do lots of different things in life.
- G** She believes that people should do what they're told. She thinks people should follow rules at all times, even when no-one is watching.
- H** It is important to her to listen to people who are different from her. Even when she disagrees with them, she still wants to understand them.
- I** It is important to her to be humble and modest. She tries not to draw attention to herself.
- J** Having a good time is important to her. She likes to 'spoil' herself.
- K** It is important to her to make her own decisions about what she does. She likes to be free and not depend on others.
- L** It's very important to her to help the people around her. She wants to care for their wellbeing.
- M** Being very successful is important to her. She hopes people will recognise her achievements.
- N** It is important to her that the government ensures her safety against all threats. She wants the state to be strong so it can defend its citizens.
- O** She looks for adventures and likes to take risks. She wants to have an exciting life.
- P** It is important to her always to behave properly. She wants to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong.
- Q** It is important to her to get respect from others. She wants people to do what she says.
- R** It is important to her to be loyal to her friends. She wants to devote herself to people close to her.
- S** She strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to her.
- T** Tradition is important to her. She tries to follow the customs handed down by her religion or her family.
- U** She seeks every chance she can to have fun. It is important to her to do things that give her pleasure.

ITEMS: 21 (space on the page is needed for both versions of the scale)

SOURCE: ESS (Schwartz Human Values Scale)

Left-right scale (5 point agree – disagree)

**41.a)** Government should redistribute income from the better-off to those who are less well off

- b. Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers
- c. Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth
- d. There is one law for the rich and one for the poor
- e. Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance

ITEMS: 5

SOURCE: Core BSA/SSA items

Liberal-authoritarianism scale (5 point agree–disagree)

- 42.** a) Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional British values.
- b. People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences.
  - c. For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence.
  - d. Schools should teach children to obey authority.
  - e. The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong.
  - f. Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards.

ITEMS: 6

SOURCE: Core BSA/SSA items

### **Socio-demographic factors**

The following will need to be collected in any survey:

- Age
- Sex
- Educational attainment
- Socio-economic and employment status
- Household income
- Ethnic group
- Religion
- National identity
- Sexual orientation
- Marital/partnership status

Community-level factors, like area-deprivation, and census information on the social mix of the area (per cent of people from ethnic minority groups, per cent of graduates, etc.) could also be added to datasets to explore the interactions between individual and community-level demographic factors in explaining attitudes.

### **Legitimising beliefs**

**43.** Why do you think there are people who live in need? Of the four views on this card, which one comes closest to your own?

CODE ONE ONLY

Because they have been unlucky

Because of laziness or lack of willpower

Because of injustice in our society

It's an inevitable part of modern life

(None of these)

ITEMS: 1

SOURCE: BSA

### **Knowledge**

**44.** Of every 100 people living in (COUNTRY) today, how many do you think:

...are black or Asian?

...were born outside the UK?

...are gay or lesbian?

...are aged over 60?

...earn more than £40,000 a year?

...have private health insurance?

...are out of work and claiming unemployment or sickness benefits?

**45.** Of every 100 children who left school in (COUNTRY) last year, how many do you think achieved five good GCSE/Standard grades?

**46.** Of every 100 children who left school in (COUNTRY) last year, how many do you think went to university?

**47.** Of every 100 children aged 5-16 in (COUNTRY) today, how many do you think attend a private fee-paying school?

ITEMS: 10

SOURCE: New/adapted from BSA

NOTES: These are just illustrations of the kinds of items that could be included, not all will be directly relevant to a study of equality, fairness and good relations. Best to decide on knowledge items once a final questionnaire is agreed so the items reflect the balance of topics included.

**Total item count for all questions included in this document = 160**



**Appendix 2 Recruitment leaflet**

<p><b>Our responsibilities to you:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We guard your privacy:</b> your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Your contribution will be used for research purposes only. Neither individual people, nor where we carry out the research will be identified in the report.</li> <li>• <b>We respect your wishes:</b> participation in the study is voluntary and you are not obliged to answer any questions you do not wish to.</li> <li>• <b>We answer your questions:</b> we will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the research.</li> </ul> 		<p><b>Building understanding of fairness and equality in England, Wales and in Scotland</b></p> <p>The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) has been asked by The Equality and Human Rights Commission to explore people's understanding of equality and fairness. We would like <b>you</b> to help us with this.</p>  
<p><b>This leaflet provides you with information about the study.</b></p>		

<p><b>Who is the National Centre for Social Research?</b></p> <p>We are an independent research organisation that carries out research in all areas of social policy. Our Qualitative Research Unit (QRU) specialises in speaking to members of the public to find out their views on a wide range of issues. This may be in the form of a discussion group, such as the one we're inviting you to, or as an interview. We are carrying out this research for The Equality and Human Rights Commission to try and understand what people think of the terms fairness and equality. Although we are carrying out the research for someone else, we remain completely independent and are interested only in what you have to say.</p> <p><b>What is the research about?</b></p> <p>We want to explore people's understandings of equality and fairness, what people consider to be fair and unfair and whether people consider fairness and equality to be important.</p> <p><b>What do I have to do?</b></p> <p>Taking part involves coming to a group discussion to talk about what you think about fairness and equality. You will not need to do anything before coming along and there are definitely no right or wrong answers.</p>	<p>During the group there will be people from different backgrounds that may have different beliefs, preferences, opinions and experiences to each other, but we are really interested in hearing your views.</p> <p>A researcher from NatCen will run the discussion group, which will be informal and would last about an hour and a half. The discussion will be audio recorded so that we have an accurate record of what people say.</p> <p><b>What will happen with what I tell you?</b></p> <p>Taking part is confidential and anonymous. We will not say who said what in the report. We don't use people's names or pass on any of your information to anyone outside the research team.</p> <p><b>Do I have to take part?</b></p> <p><b>No - taking part is voluntary.</b> You do not have to take part. It is completely up to you and you can change your mind at any time.</p> <p><b>Will I get anything for taking part?</b></p> <p>Every person that takes part in one of our discussion groups will be given £35 as a thank you for giving up their time.</p>	<p><b>What if I have some more questions?</b></p> <p><i>If you have any other questions, please feel free to get in touch with:</i></p> <p><b>Rachel Kinsella</b>  Email: <a href="mailto:r.kinsella@natcen.ac.uk">r.kinsella@natcen.ac.uk</a>  Phone: <b>020 7549 9543</b></p> <p><b>Project Team</b></p> <p><b>Naomi Jones</b> – Research Director  <b>Rachel Kinsella</b> – Researcher  <b>Naomi Day</b> – Researcher  <b>Alan Ross</b> – Researcher  <b>Robin Legard</b> – Fieldwork Advisor</p> <p><b>National Centre for Social Research</b>  35 Northampton Square  London EC1V 0AX  Tel: +44 (0)20 7250 1866  Fax: +44 (0)20 7250 1524  Web: <a href="http://www.natcen.ac.uk">www.natcen.ac.uk</a></p> <p>The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) is the largest independent social research institute in Britain. We design, carry out, and analyse, research studies in the fields of social and public policy. NatCen is a company limited by guarantee (Company registration number: 4392418) and a registered charity (Charity number 1091768)</p>
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## Appendix 3      Topic guide

### Qualitative study: Building understanding of fairness and equality in England, Wales and Scotland Note: Introduction to the topic guide

As this is an investigative and exploratory study, we wish to encourage participants to discuss their views, perceptions, attitudes and experiences in an open way without excluding issues which may be of importance to the study. Therefore, unlike a survey questionnaire or semi-structured interview, the questioning will be responsive to the issues raised in group discussion.

The following guide does not contain pre-set questions but rather lists the key themes and sub-themes to be explored within each group. It does not include follow-up questions like 'why', 'when', 'how', etc. as it is assumed that participants' contributions will be fully explored throughout in order to understand how and why views are held.

The topics will be introduced and explored in turn within each group. The amount of time spent on different themes will vary between groups in response to the discussion generated amongst participants.

*NB: text in italics within the guide denotes instruction to the researcher.*

#### Aims and Objectives:

The aim of this study is to explore participants' understanding of, and views on equality and fairness.

The key objectives are:

- To explore participants' understanding of the terms fairness, equalities and good relations (GR).
- To explore how participants understand good relations and how they relate this to understandings of fairness and equality.
- To explore what factors drive participants' attitudes to fairness and equality and GR including:
  - Social knowledge
  - Values
  - Social context
  - Life course experience
- To explore how participants legitimise their beliefs about fairness and equality
- To explore how participants rank achieving equality and GR in relation to other desirable social outcomes
- To explore participants' aspirations in relation to equality and fairness and GR both for themselves and for wider society
- To explore the language that participants use in relation to equality and fairness and GR in order to inform survey questions

## 1. Introduction (5 mins)

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*Aim: to introduce the research and set the context for the focus group.*

- Introduce **self and NatCen**. Explain why two researchers are present (where applicable)
- **Introduce the study and the Commission:**  
NatCen has been asked to carry out this research by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. The purpose of the study is to find out what the general public think about equality and fairness. This is so that the Commission can make sure that the work they do fits well with what people think.
- **Stress independence of NatCen:**  
Although NatCen is carrying out this research on behalf of the Equalities and Human Rights commission we are completely independent. We have no particular agenda in doing this research, we're simply here to listen to what you have to say.
- Details about their participation:
  - **voluntary** nature of participation - both overall and in relation to any specific questions and discussions
  - **recording** of focus group
  - **confidentiality**, and how findings will be reported
  - Ask people to **respect** each other's views and confidentiality
  - Emphasise that there is no need for people to share personal experiences unless they want to.
  - length of group –**1.5 hours**. Will finish on time
- Explain there are **no wrong or right** answers – interested in views, opinions and experiences.
- Explain that we're not expecting them to be experts and that we're certainly not experts ourselves. We're not interested in catching them out, just hearing what they have to say.
- Basic ground rules:
  - **mobile phones off/on silent**
  - **no consensus** sought – range of views useful
  - **talking one at a time** (recording)
- Any **questions** they have.

## 2. Background (7 mins)

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*Aim: to allow each participant to introduce themselves to the facilitator and the group.*

**Participants should pair up and take 2 minutes to gather the following information about each other. Each person states their name first and then feedbacks the key information for their partner to the group.**

- Background about themselves
  - What they do as a main activity
  - How long they have lived in the area
  - Family background
- Something that happened to them in the last month that they considered to be unfair (*stress that this could be anything at all*)

### 3. Understanding of equality and fairness

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*Aims:*

- 1) *To explore what participants understand by the terms equality and fairness.*
- 2) *To explore the language that participants use around equality and fairness*
- 3) *To explore what participants think about good relations and it's relationship to equality and fairness*

#### **3a: Fairness (12 mins)**

*Link: We've been hearing a bit about your experiences of something you considered unfair thinking now about fairness more broadly I'd like to start by asking*

#### **Is Britain fair?**

##### **Prompts**

What ways do they think that it is and isn't and why

- What does the term "fairness" mean
  - What makes something "fair"
  - What makes something "unfair"
- In what situations would they think about "fairness"
- Is fairness important?
- When do they talk about something being fair or unfair?
- Where is "fairness" important – in what contexts/situations/ Why?

*Allow for spontaneous response. If not mentioned prompt with:*

*Housing*

*Education*

*Healthcare*

*Employment*

- What are the effects of unfairness: examples?
- Is fairness a term that they would normally use?

#### **3b: Equality (12 mins)**

#### **Is Britain equal?**

##### **Prompts**

- Is equality a good thing? (where is and isn't it)
- What ways do they think that it is and isn't and why
- What does the term "equal/equality" mean
  - What makes something "equal"
- What helps to create equality?
- In what contexts would they think in terms of equality?
- How do they think equality differs from fairness?
- Where is equality important; in what sorts of situations? Why?

*Allow spontaneous response, then prompt with:*

Housing  
Healthcare  
Education  
Employment

- What do they see as inequality?
- What are the implications of inequality?

### 3c: Good relations (12 mins)

#### **What do participants understand by the term ‘good relations’**

*If asked to define then ask participants what they think it means*

*Flip chart exercise*

#### **Prompts**

- Terms that they’re familiar with?
- In what situations have they heard it used? (people getting on with their communities? International relations?)
- What sorts of things contribute to good relations?
- How does good relations relate to equality? How does it relate to fairness?
- To what extent can good relations be independent of equality or fairness?
- Are good relations important in society? Where? Where not?
- Is it worth trying to achieve equality?
- What happens when you do not have “good relations”? Examples (*if extra prompting needed, ask what communities getting on well might look like*)
- What are the effects of poor relations?
- What do they understand by the following terms  
*If not already mentioned in any of the discussions:*  
Prejudice  
Community cohesion  
Justice  
Discrimination  
Neighbourliness

### **4. Real life situations (20 mins)**

---

*Aim: to understand what factors shape participants’ understanding of, and attitude to, equality and fairness.*

Hand out the cards with the case studies on one by one and read them out

N.B. In each group you should go through three case studies but which ones you use is at your discretion

#### **Case Study 1 (Economic Inequality)**

A premier league footballer earns around £3 million a year while a shop assistant earns around £18,000 a year. What do you think about this?

<b>Prompts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's the difference if:                  The shop assistant is a nurse                  The footballer is chief executive of a large bank</li> <li>• What would make this more/less acceptable?</li> </ul>

**Case Study 2 (Discrimination)**

A gay couple apply to rent a property but the landlord tells them that it has already been let. They later learn that the property had not really been let when they asked and was actually let two weeks later to a straight couple. What do you think about this?

<b>Prompts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do they see this as being right or wrong?</li> <li>• Would it have made any difference if the landlord had explicitly said in the advert that he didn't want a gay couple. Why?</li> <li>• What would make this more/less acceptable?</li> </ul>

**Case Study 3 (Employment, faith and discrimination)**

A Muslim women working as a hairdresser is asked not to wear a veil as her manager thinks that covering hair is bad for business. The hairdresser wants to wear her veil as it is an important part of her religion. What do you think about this?

<b>Prompts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would it make a difference if the woman was in a different job? What?</li> <li>• Would it make a difference if the hairdresser was male and wore a turban?</li> <li>• What do they think about employers telling staff how to dress generally?</li> </ul>

**Case Study 4 (Positive discrimination)**

The London Metropolitan Police decides that the number of black Police Officers it employs is too small and doesn't represent the number of black people living in London. It therefore places a job advert that encourages black people to apply. What do you think about this?

<b>Prompts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would the difference be if the Police were looking to recruit more:                  Women                  Gay or Lesbian officers                  People with a disability</li> <li>• What if the advert did not explicitly say that the Police were looking for black</li> </ul>

applicants but the advert was placed in specialist magazines and newspapers read by large numbers of black people?

- Would it make any difference if it was the NHS putting out this advert?  
Or a large financial firm?

### Case study 5 (Disability)

A disabled employee requires time off for doctor's appointments, hospital appointments, aids and adaptations appointments etc. Her employer says that she is taking too much time off and says she must book them as holidays. What do you think?

#### Prompts

- Does the nature of the disability make any difference?
- What factors would make this more or less acceptable?

## 5. Importance of equality (15 mins)

*Aim; To explore how participants prioritise fairness and equality in relation to other social outcomes*

*Split groups into two and hand out a set of cards to each group. Ask each group to come up with the 3 cards that represent the issues that they see as being most important to the UK today and the 3 cards that they see as being the least important.*

*Allow 8 minutes for discussion then ask them to come back together and explain their choices to the other group.*

### Sorting cards:

A thriving economy  
 Equal healthcare for everyone  
 Good race relations  
 Controlled immigration  
 Low unemployment  
 Strong community spirit  
 Environmentally friendly behaviour  
 Tougher punishment for crime  
 Low gas and electricity prices  
 Good education for everyone  
 Higher minimum wage  
 Lower crime  
 Higher tax for high earners  
 Better public transport  
 Fairer treatment of people with disabilities

### Prompts

- What did they disagree/ agree on?
- Reasons for the order
  - Any situations in which they would move X higher up
  - Difficulty or ease of deciding order
- Do any of these issues relate to equality and fairness



- Which ones
- Why
- Would there answers have been different 6 months ago

## **6. Reflections (8 mins)**

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*Aim: to give group participants the opportunity to give overall thoughts on equality and fairness.*

- Are these subjects that participants would normally have thought about?
- Why/Why not?
- How important do they consider them to be?
- Thoughts on the group in general
- If they were in government what would their recommendations for equality and fairness be?
- How comfortable did you feel talking about these issues with each other?

***Bring discussion to close, thank respondents and reiterate confidential nature of the group.***

Any questions about us or the research?

Give out incentives

## Appendix 4 Focus group participant breakdown

### England

Group No.	No. participants	Ethnic minority	Mental or physical disability	Lesbian, gay, or bisexual	Religious belief - Christian	Religious belief - Muslim	Religious belief - Other
1	6	2	0	1	1	0	4
2	8	0	3	0	2	0	1
3	8	3	1	2	0	1	1
4	8	0	2	0	5	0	1
5	8	2	1	2	2	1	1
6	9	0	4	0	6	0	1
7	9	2	3	2	3	2	3
8	7	2	1	1	5	0	1
21	9	3	0	0	4	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Quotas</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	

### Scotland

Group No.	No. participants	Ethnic minority	Mental or physical disability	Lesbian, gay, or bisexual	Religious Belief - Christian	Religious Belief - Muslim	Religious Belief - Other
9	9	0	0	0	7	0	0
10	6	0	0	0	4	0	0
11	9	2	2	2	5	0	1
12	9	0	1	0	7	0	0
13	7	2	1	0	3	0	0
14	8	0	4	0	7	0	0
15	9	0	1	2	4	0	0
16	9	0	1	1	3	0	0
22	9	0	8	0	6	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quotas</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	

### Wales

Group No.	No. participants	Ethnic minority	Mental or physical disability	Lesbian, gay or bisexual	Welsh speakers	Religious Belief - Christian
17	8	3	1	3	0	2
18	8	0	0	0	3	2
19	7	0	2	0	0	7
20	8	0	1	1	8	4
23	8	1	1	3	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Quotas</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> In Britain the ISSP is administered as a module within the British Social Attitudes Survey.

<sup>2</sup> The Best Value surveys conducted by local authorities in England were considered but their questions often overlapped with or, in the case of community cohesion, matched those in the studies already selected for the case studies, e.g. the Citizenship Survey.

<sup>3</sup> See also:

[http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/textonly/case/research/equality/Briefing\\_Equality\\_Measurement\\_Framework.pdf](http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/textonly/case/research/equality/Briefing_Equality_Measurement_Framework.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Though the fact they are cited within a module of questions about income differences and fair pay means that this it is highly likely that people's thinking will be framed in terms of income inequality.

<sup>5</sup> It will be new to Britain, it has been asked in other countries in previous rounds of the study.

<sup>6</sup> See [www.ipsospublicaffairs.co.uk/\\_assets/pdfs/socialmobilityjune08.pdf](http://www.ipsospublicaffairs.co.uk/_assets/pdfs/socialmobilityjune08.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> See [www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk](http://www.asharedfutureni.gov.uk)

<sup>8</sup> See the statistical release covering the April 2007–March 2008 survey for more information about the PSA targets measured by the Citizenship Survey:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/citizenshipsurveyaprmar08>

<sup>9</sup> This preliminary analysis was conducted using principal components factor analysis. To carry out a more comprehensive analysis of this and classify respondents into groups based on their choices would require latent class analysis, a more appropriate, but more complex, method.

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## **Building understanding of fairness, equality and good relations**

by Naomi Jones et al.

This study explores public understanding of the concepts 'equality', 'fairness' and 'good relations', the key factors that influence public attitudes about these issues and the implications of people's understanding and attitudes for achieving change. The research includes a review of existing evidence on public attitudes, focus groups throughout Britain and two stakeholder seminars. This led to the drafting of a set of survey questions which can be used to measure and track public attitudes. As a whole, the three concepts were seen as unobtainable but they attracted public support when broken down into understandable and specific contexts, and were recognised as important components of society.